

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT JOINT AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY



Introduction

Further to the publication of the Stevenage Road Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) Action Plan in 2013 and the designation in 2017 of an AQMA in the vicinity of the Payne's Park roundabout a decision was taken by the Council to draft an Action Plan that would be applicable to both AQMA.

The purpose of the Joint Action Plan is to identify measures that if implemented may result in an improvement in local air quality.

This non-technical summary of the draft Action Plan is intended to assist the consultation process.

Why has the Council designated an Air Quality Management Area in Hitchin?

The Government has set standards for a range of pollutants that are known to affect public health and local councils have a duty to monitor air quality in their area. The monitoring that has been undertaken has shown that levels of nitrogen dioxide are high at several roadside locations in the district, and in Hitchin at Stevenage Road and the Payne's Park roundabout, the levels are slightly above the limit set for nitrogen dioxide.

What are the pollution levels at Stevenage Road and Payne's Park?

Nitrogen dioxide is measured in micrograms per cubic metre. This is written as $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. A microgram is one thousandth of a gram. The air quality limit for nitrogen dioxide is $40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

The highest measured concentration at Stevenage Road since 2011 has been about $53\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ although this was very close to the road. The highest level at a nearby property has been $42\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

The highest measured concentration in the vicinity of the Payne's Park roundabout since 2011 has been about $54\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ although this was very close to the road. The highest level at a nearby property has been $47\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

Although the levels of pollution are not consistently so serious that people should be worried they are at a point where we should be trying to do something so that they don't reach a level where they might have a direct effect on people's health.

Where does the pollution come from?

The main source of pollution is road traffic. Stevenage Road and also Park Way is the main road between Stevenage and Luton. The Hitchin Hill roundabout at Stevenage Road and the Payne's Park roundabout are busy junctions where numerous roads meet. Between 80 - 85% of vehicles travelling along Stevenage Road towards the Hitchin Hill roundabout are cars and between 15 - 18% are light or heavy good vehicles. However, it is estimated that cars contribute between 44 - 49 % to emissions whereas light and heavy goods vehicles contribute 43 - 46%.

What is the Council suggesting should be done?

North Hertfordshire District Council does not have control over all factors affecting air pollution levels. For example, the Government is responsible for setting vehicle emission standards. Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for highways in the

district. However, the proposed measures in the draft Action Plan are realistic and proportionate, and should contribute towards the aim of improving air quality. The measures are split into nine broad categories and they have been prioritised for the purpose of this Joint Action Plan as follows:

1. Freight and delivery management
2. Vehicle fleet efficiency
3. Promoting travel alternatives
4. Promoting low emission transport
5. Traffic management
6. Transport planning and infrastructure
7. Alternatives to private vehicle use
8. Public information
9. Policy guidance and development control

Within each of these categories 22 specific measures have been identified and these can be found in Table 5.1 of the Draft Joint Action Plan report.

Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Description
Action Plan	Air Quality Action Plan - A detailed description of measures, outcomes, achievement dates and implementation methods, showing how the local authority intends to achieve air quality limit values'
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area – An area where air pollutant concentrations exceed / are likely to exceed the relevant air quality objectives. AQMAs are declared for specific pollutants and objectives
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
LAQM	Local Air Quality Management
NO ₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
µg/m ³	Mircograms per cubic meter
Low emission transport	Vehicles that emit significantly low levels of nitrogen dioxide and other pollutants, or that have no such emissions. Examples include, electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles