

# Licensing and Regulatory Committee



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>West Suffolk Local Air Quality Progress Report (2017-2018)</b>
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>LIC/SE/18/004</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Alaric Pugh Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth <b>Tel:</b> 07930 460899 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Alaric.pugh@stedsbcc.gov.uk">Alaric.pugh@stedsbcc.gov.uk</a>
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Matthew Axton Environment Officer <b>Tel:</b> 01284 757041 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:matthew.axton@westsuffolk.gov.uk">matthew.axton@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To report the work undertaken during 2017 to meet Local Air Quality regulations across the Borough including the specific work in relation to the Great Barton Air Quality Management Area.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Licensing and Regulatory Committee:</b>  <b>It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that the Committee:</b>  (1) <b><u>Notes</u> and supports the work undertaken in order to improve local air quality in West Suffolk; and</b>  (2) <b><u>Supports</u> the Great Barton Air Quality Management Area Action Plan.</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>  <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <b><u>do not</u></b> apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>Consultation:</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consultation required with the Department of Environment (Defra) to approve technical elements of the Annual Status Report.</b></li> <li>• <b>Consultation with key stakeholders to approve Great Barton Air Quality Management Area Action Plan including residents of Great Barton.</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Alternative option(s):</b>		N/A	
<b>Implications:</b>			
Are there any <b>financial</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial costs in officer time, possible additional monitoring and possible commissioning of external studies or modelling to confirm the benefits of measures identified within Great Barton AQMA Action Plan.</li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>staffing</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any additional work will be covered by existing officers.</li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>ICT</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>legal and/or policy</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
Are there any <b>equality</b> implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<b>Risk/opportunity assessment:</b>		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
Statutory Responsibilities	Medium	Delivering the statutory responsibilities will help reduce the inherent level of risk.	Low
Reputational	Medium	The Councils' work will help achieve a credible pathway to improving air quality.	Low
Financial	Low	Cost-benefit of key work will continue to be reviewed and adjusted.	Low
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>		All Wards are affected by air quality, and specifically Great Barton Ward in relation to the AQMA Action Plan.	
<b>Background papers:</b>		None	
<b>Documents attached:</b>		<b>Appendix 1</b> – 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) <b>Appendix 2</b> – Draft Great Barton Air Quality Management Area Action Plan.	

## **1. Key issues and air quality background to recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 Air quality has direct implications for human health. Research shows that poor air quality can reduce the quality of life by causing health problems, especially in those who are more vulnerable such as children, the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. There is considerable research showing a link between exposure to air pollution and effects on health.
- 1.2 Improving the air quality will help to improve the long term health of our local communities, makes our towns more attractive places to visit and therefore improves the local economy.
- 1.3 The Air Quality Regulations 2000 require all local authorities in the UK to review and assess air quality within their area. West Suffolk councils are the lead regulators within their administrative areas with respect to the management of local air quality. Officers in Planning and Regulatory Services carry out various activities to fulfil these responsibilities. This includes monitoring local air quality, declaring Air Quality Management Areas (such as within Great Barton), implementing any statutory and non-statutory actions for the purpose of improving air quality, providing advice on air quality and development.
- 1.4 As part of our statutory duties, the council prepares an annual report for submission to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), a copy of which is attached (**Appendix 1**). The report follows the format required by Defra and is of a technical nature. However, the key issues covered in the report are set out below.
- 1.5 The key pollutant of concern locally is Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), which is primarily caused by emissions from vehicle exhausts, for which the national annual mean objective (threshold) is 40 microgrammes per metre cubed (µg/m<sup>3</sup>) to be applied at the façade of residential properties. An hourly objective also exists for NO<sub>2</sub>, to be applied along busy shopping streets, and should be considered where the annual mean level is 60 µg/m<sup>3</sup> or greater. There were 24 monitoring sites within St Edmundsbury during 2017.
- 1.6 Road transport is a major source of air pollution both nationally and locally. West Suffolk councils work with other organisations to maintain and monitor the quality of air in the locality. Suffolk County Council and the Highways Agency are key partners and work with Council Officers to secure good air quality.
- 1.7 Defra have continued to develop a national strategy "UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations", published July 2017. Twenty-eight Local Authorities were originally named within the plan, with an additional thirty three being added after a High Court ruling in February 2018. These authorities have significant ongoing air quality problems as identified by Defra modelling and are required to develop local assessments and plans to achieve the statutory nitrogen dioxide limits in the shortest time possible. No Suffolk local authorities are named within the national strategy.

- 1.8 A further national document that is currently being consulted on is the "Draft Clean Air Strategy". This document aims to tackle a broad range of pollution sources, including domestic, industrial, farming and transport.

## **2. Outcomes for 2017-2018**

- 2.1 For the majority of the Borough, air quality remains good, being below national limits, and continues to show a long term trend of slight year on year improvement. However, we continue to undertake detailed monitoring throughout the Borough.
- 2.2 Only one monitored location in St Edmundsbury Borough Council was above the national annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide in 2017. This was located in the newly formed Air Quality Management Area on Sicklesmere Road, Bury St Edmunds and recorded a value of 44.7 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. This Committee will remember that the declaration for the Sicklesmere Road AQMA was only approved by this Committee in April of this year (Report No: LIC/SE/18/003) and work on the associated Action Plan is only at a very early stage. Further updates on the Sicklesmere Road Action Plan will be provided in due course.
- 2.3 Work on the Great Barton Air Quality Management Area is discussed in Section 3 below.
- 2.4 Although levels of measured pollutants in all other areas of St Edmundsbury remain in compliance with the national objectives, your officers are aware that there are negative health impacts related to lower concentrations of certain pollutants, especially particulates. Therefore, work will continue to monitor and improve air quality further, as detailed in Section 4 below.
- 2.9 Other actions taken by your Officers over the past year included:
- Producing an Air Quality Improvement Plan which clearly sets out the statutory and non-statutory work that your Officers are currently undertaking; plan to undertake and aspire to achieve in the medium term. This is included as an Appendix to the Annual Status Report as provided.
  - Commenting on and influencing planning applications to ensure that they have minimum impact on Local Air Quality.
  - Requesting new developments are suitably equipped with electric vehicle charge points to encourage the faster uptake of zero emission vehicles and to ensure developments in the area are suitably futureproofed for the proposed phasing out of petrol and diesel only vehicles in 2040. We have achieved a number of successes in this regard securing charge points through conditions of planning consents. Examples include the provision of Rapid Electric Vehicle charge points at the proposed drive-through coffee outlet on Etna Road (DC/17/0438/FUL) and the coffee shop unit and drive-through facility on the Suffolk Business Park (DC/17/1469/FUL).

- Promotion of internal and external grants to assist companies (including taxi companies) in converting their fleet to low and zero emission vehicles.
- Promotion of zero emission electric vehicles to the general public.

### **3. Great Barton Air Quality Management Area Action Plan**

- 3.1 Monitoring for nitrogen dioxide during 2017 in the Great Barton Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has not shown any breach of the national objectives. However, it has been recognised that historical monitoring of the AQMA has not targeted the worst case scenarios at the façade of the properties and therefore new monitoring points were introduced at the beginning of 2018. Initial data from these new monitoring locations within the centre of the AQMA are demonstrating that the air quality objectives are being breached and therefore action remains relevant.
- 3.2 An Action Plan has been developed with the support of a steering group that has met on a number of occasions. The steering group consists of air quality Officers, a planning Officer, a County Council Highways Officer, the Ward Member, as well as representatives from the parish council, the neighbourhood plan committee, the local school and local residents.
- 3.3 A number of measures have been considered, some of which are not being pursued presently due to currently being impractical or not having a reasonable funding source (such as a Great Barton by-pass).
- 3.4 A number of measures are, however, being investigated, as detailed in the Action Plan. These include the moving of the pedestrian crossing, which is currently located immediately adjacent to the AQMA; and the improvement of the Thurston Road (Bunbury Arms) Junction of the A143. Both of these measures are being investigated in conjunction with the Suffolk County Council Highways officer.
- 3.5 Officers have identified a measure that has implications on a neighbouring authority. This being the Heavy Goods Vehicle weight restriction on the A1088 between Ixworth and Elmswell, which is preliminary within the Mid Suffolk administrative area. Officers at Suffolk County Council have yet to establish the purpose of the order although unspecified environmental reasons have been cited. County Council Officers have not been able to identify any physical restrictions that would necessitate this restriction.
- 3.6 The result of this restriction is that HGV traffic commencing in locations such as Stanton are not able to use the A1088 when trying to reach the A14 and consequently forced to use a longer route, often through Great Barton. This has a two-fold negative impact on the environment:
  - Additional HGV movements through an area where national air quality objectives are being breached, exacerbating this issue.
  - The greater distance creates additional carbon emissions which is contrary to the Suffolk ambition to be the Greenest County.

- 3.7 Officers have calculated that for approximately every 100 lorries per day travelling through the AQMA, 1 unit is added to the annual mean level of nitrogen dioxide recorded in the AQMA, using the emerging 2018 monitoring data.
- 3.7 Officers are aware that any change to this restriction would have potentially negative impacts on the village of Norton within the Mid Suffolk administrative area. However, this needs to be weighed up against the air quality level currently recorded in Great Barton.
- 3.8 Officers are therefore making a request to County Council Highways department, at a senior level, to review the HGV restrictions on the A1088, asking for confirmation of the environmental impacts that this restriction supports and how they are judged to outweigh the air quality concerns in Great Barton.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1 Officers will continue to undertake the following activities:
- Continue monitoring levels of nitrogen dioxide throughout the Borough.
  - Form a Steering Group and progress the Action Plan for the Sicklesmere Road Air Quality Management Area.
  - Undertake Consultation on and start implementing actions within the Great Barton AQMA Action Plan (if approved by this Committee).
  - Work with air quality and planning colleagues across Suffolk to ensure standardised requirements for electric vehicle charging for new planning applications across the County.
  - Continue to promote grants for business fleet improvements.
  - Produce business cases for further investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
  - Engage with stakeholders in areas where there may be concern to explore the need for further action.

#### **5. Additional supporting information**

- 5.1 **Appendix 1** - 2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) In fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management. Provided separately.
- 5.2 **Appendix 2** – Draft Great Barton Air Quality Management Area Action Plan. In fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management. Provided separately.