

Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2024 to 2029

Report number:	CAB/WS/24/012	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	6 February 2024
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Decisions Plan: The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: The Fornhams & Great Barton

Recommendation: It is recommended that Cabinet adopt the proposed update of the Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan for the period January 2024 to January 2029.

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 introduced the system of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM), placing a statutory duty on local authorities to periodically review and assess the air quality within their area. In its simplest form, LAQM is an obligation placed on all first-tier local authorities in the UK (borough, district and unitary authorities, but not county councils) to review the air quality in their areas, and assess whether there are likely exceedances of the UK Air Quality Objectives at the relevant date. Where exceedance is thought likely, the authority is required to declare an air quality management area (AQMA), covering at least the area of exceedance. Local circumstances will also determine the content of local air quality strategies, the designation of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and the content of Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs).
- 1.2 In 2017, Gt Barton declared an AQMA for a short stretch of the A143 because the annual average level of nitrogen dioxide was noted as above the national objective which is 40µgpm². This particular area is a 'canyon' and traps air pollution, which is one of the main problems that causes pollution in this small area.
- 1.3 In accordance with legislation, West Suffolk Council are required to have an Air Quality Action Plan for Great Barton, which stipulates the actions that will be taken to improve air quality in this area, setting out the target to show consistently reduced levels of pollution over the course of five years. The Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan has been in place since 2018 and has registered a consistent reduction in air pollution, but not for the requisite five-year period.
- 1.4 As it has not registered a consistent reduction in air pollution over five years, West Suffolk Council must renew and update the Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan for a further five year period.
- 1.5 One of the main pieces of work from the previous action plan (2018-2023) including moving the pedestrian crossing further from the AQMA with the aim of reducing queueing. Other actions in the plan mainly focused on education. (The previous action plan is shown in the background documents). The new actions set out in the proposed AQAP (2024-2029) now seek to build upon the previous work.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 The proposed Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan (Appendix A), that will cover the period January 2024 to January 2029, covers three main priorities:
1. Reducing the number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and light goods vehicles (LGVs) travelling through Great Barton where possible.
 2. Improve the flow of traffic along the A143.
 3. Ensuring that new developments contribute positively to local air quality.

- 2.2 To ensure that new developments do not hinder the progress made in Great Barton so far, it is proposed that the following actions will be taken:
- Undertake a traffic management feasibility assessment – this will review and explore localised options for traffic management improvement initiatives, such as traffic modelling, the possibility of re-routing HGVs, speed limit reduction.
 - In collaboration with Suffolk County Council implement traffic management improvements – the assessed traffic improvement initiatives will be consulted on locally and implemented, assuming successfully passing public consultation, and funding is secured.
 - Engage with HGV drivers about local air quality – this will involve direct engagement with companies that utilise HGV drivers around methods of lowering emissions.
 - Reduce emissions from new commercial developments - this would be through ensuring that low emission strategies are submitted with all commercial development planning applications that could impact on the AQMA.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 The renewal of the Air Quality Action Plan is a statutory requirement for the council. As such, no alternative approaches were considered.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 Before adopting the updated Air Quality Action Plan, we are obliged to consult the key stakeholders below. This consultation took place between 20 December 2023 and 22 January 2024. The following parties were advised of our new proposed actions accordingly and invited to provide comments:
- The Environment Agency
 - Suffolk County Council Highways Team
 - Suffolk County Council Public Health Team
 - Mid-Suffolk Council
 - British Sugar
 - Local businesses
 - Community groups
 - Great Barton Parish Council
 - Local councillors
 - Residents
- 4.2 Local residents, both outside and inside the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), as well as the local Parish Council and Primary School, were invited to comment directly through a mail drop, which was posted on 20 December 2023.
- 4.3 20 responses were received from the National Highways, Highways Authority, Suffolk County Council Environmental Health, the Environment Agency, Great Barton Primary School, Great Barton Parish Council, Green Ixworth and local residents. Details can be viewed in Appendix B.

- 4.4 All statutory respondents were generally supportive of the action plan as proposed. Local residents, the Parish Council and community groups emphasised the importance of lowering emissions in the area through improving traffic conditions.
- 4.5 The most frequent recommendation focused on the inclusion of a by-pass into the proposed feasibility study. Other suggestions included improving signage, limiting HGV traffic and alternative travel to school systems.
- 4.6 As a result of this feedback, a section on engaging with young people has been added to the AQAP document, to ensure that local young people continue to participate with this process. All other feedback will be taken into consideration through the proposed feasibility study.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 There is a risk that the actions proposed in the AQAP will not result in the required reduction in nitrogen dioxide over the next five year period. This will be mitigated through careful monitoring and adjustment of the actions during the plan period.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 Financial – There are no implications – the plan can be implemented from within existing resources. The Traffic Feasibility report will be funded through operational budget.
- 6.2 Legal compliance – The adoption of the action plan fulfils the council’s obligations under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.
- 6.3 Personal data processing – There are no implications.
- 6.4 Equalities – There are no implications.
- 6.5 Crime and disorder – There are no implications.
- 6.6 Safeguarding – There are no implications.
- 6.7 Environment or sustainability – The plan benefits the environment by reducing air pollution in an identified area of high pollution.
- 6.8 HR or staffing – There are no implications – the strategy can be implemented from existing resources.
- 6.9 Changes to existing policies – There are no implications.
- 6.10 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups) – The plan has taken into account the views of local businesses, including haulage companies.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix a - Draft Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan (2024-2029)
- 7.2 Appendix B – Summary of Response to Consultation

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 [St Edmundsbury Borough Council Air Quality Action Plan](#)