

HITCHIN AREA COMMITTEE
28 JUNE 2022

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: AIR QUALITY IN HITCHIN

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE AIR QUALITY CONSULTANT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this information note is to inform the Committee on the status of Air Quality in Hitchin.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The note has been written following a request from Cllr Albert in response to receiving the Annual Status report in February.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 Background to Air Quality Assessment and Measurements

3.2 *Local Air Quality Management*

The Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to monitor air pollution against national targets and to take action where it is found that these targets are unlikely to be met.

Local Air Quality in North Hertfordshire is summarised each year in a Statutory Report submitted annually to DEFRA, and is the Annual Status Report.

As stated above, the emphasis on Local Authorities is to take action where it is found that

air quality targets are unlikely to be met, as determined by a local programme of air quality monitoring across the district.

The following link gives reference to a recent report, highlighting Local Authority responsibilities in relation to managing air quality.

[Local Government air quality responsibilities - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/library/research-and-briefing/papers/2019/01/2019-01-29-local-government-air-quality-responsibilities)

3.3 *Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime*

The [Environment Act 1995](#) (as amended) requires the UK Government and the devolved administrations for Scotland and Wales to produce a national air quality strategy containing standards, objectives and measures for improving ambient air quality and to keep these policies under review. The [Environment \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2002](#) makes corresponding requirements for Northern Ireland. The latest version of the strategy is the 2007 [Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).

In addition to this, the EU “Air Quality Directive” ([EU Directive 2008/50/EC](#)) on ambient

air quality and cleaner air for Europe sets legally binding standards for ambient air quality (the condition of the air in the outdoor environment). The Directive is implemented in the UK through regulations for each country.

The local air quality management (LAQM) regime requires every district and unitary authority to regularly review and assess air quality in their area. These reviews identify whether national objectives have been, or will be, achieved at relevant locations, by an applicable date.

3.4 *Actions to improve air quality*

Local authorities use various means to achieve air quality standards, such as traffic and parking management, road design and planning, vehicle regulation, introducing Clean Air Zones, establishing Smoke Control Areas, enforcing statutory nuisance powers and regulating planning.

3.5 *Proposals to improve air quality*

The Government has published and consulted on various proposals aimed at improving local air quality management. Some of these were included in the Environment Bill 2019 which fell at Dissolution.

A new *Environment Bill* (Bill 9, 2019-20) was introduced on 30 January 2020 containing measures to clarify duties and enable greater cooperation under the Local Air Quality Management Framework, make smoke emissions in Smoke Control Areas in England subject to civil penalty notices (fines) rather than prosecution as criminal offences, and redefine smoke from private dwellings in smoke control areas in England as a statutory nuisance.

3.6 The Annual Status Report

The Local Air Quality Management Process in the UK is managed by DEFRA, under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.

DEFRA have issued detailed Policy and Technical Guidance guidance to Local Authorities to assist Local Authorities in making appropriate assessments and submitting the appropriate reports.

Ref: Policy Guidance <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/documents/LAQM-PG16-April-16-v1.pdf>

Ref Technical Guidance: <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/air-quality/featured/uk-regions-exc-london-technical-guidance>

Local authorities are required to submit an ASR each year.

The overall aim of this document is to report on progress in achieving reductions in concentrations of emissions relating to relevant pollutants below air quality objective levels.

3.7 *Core requirements of the ASR :*

- To report progress on the implementation of measures in the local air quality action plan and other measures and their impact in reducing concentrations below air quality objectives;
- To provide a summary of monitoring/modelling data (either locally retrieved and/or from the national network) in order to assess the air quality situation in your area and

likelihood of air quality breaches, and to provide the necessary evidence base for the impact of air quality measures;

- To report on significant new developments that might affect local air quality; and
- To present information in a public-facing executive summary for the lay reader so that the local public can more easily engage with local air quality issues and measures taken to improve it.

3.8 2021 ASR Air Quality with reference to results for Hitchin

The Executive Summary at the front of the report highlights results in relation to air quality objectives.

The report highlights that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only limited monitoring has been carried out, but the results of longer term trends can be seen by looking at results within the following tables in the report.

Tables A4 – A6 for Nitrogen Dioxide

Table A7 for PM10

Table A8 for PM2.5

The following text is copied from the Executive Summary:

Historically there have been two areas where pollution concentrations for nitrogen dioxide, close to busy road junctions in Hitchin have exceeded air quality objectives, resulting in declarations of Air Quality Management Areas on Stevenage Road (AQMA 2012) and Payne’s Park Roundabout (AQMA 2017), both along the A602.

The latest, (post-pandemic) trends from long term monitoring sites show significant improvements in air quality at most monitoring sites.

For the Stevenage Road AQMA, close examination of monitoring results highlights that pollution levels closest to the Hitchin Hill Roundabout have now fallen below objective levels, and results over the last 4 years, when corrected for relevant exposure are all below objective levels.

For the Payne’s Park AQMA there is a single monitoring site (NH93) within the AQMA, that remains above objective levels when corrected for relevant exposure, (for data to 2019, no data for 2020)

In summary: from results of monitoring data corrected for relevant exposure shows the following:

Stevenage Road AQMA

- No results above objectives for 4 years in succession (2020,2019, 2018,2017).
- No results within 10% of objective levels in the last three years (2020, 2019, 2018)

Payne’s Park AQMA (Incomplete data for 2020)

- Two years with results above objectives in last 4 years (2018, 2017)
- Last 4 years with results within 10% of objective levels (2020,2019,2018,2017)

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 In summary these results suggest the following in relation to the continued status of these AQMAs.

Stevenage Road AQMA

- Continue monitoring in 2021 and 2022, and if no results within 10% of objectives, then recommend this AQMA should be revoked.

Payne's Park AQMA

- Retain the current AQMA. Continue monitoring during 2021-2, until all results are consistently below 90% of the objective level, before recommending revocation of the AQMA.

For Both AQMA sites

Review of monitoring locations within and close to each AQMA to provide evidence to review status of each AQMA.

Thus, the status of the AQMA's is that they do not indicate any current or recent exceedances of the relevant statutory air quality objectives, and the current position (agreed by DEFRA), is to review the monitoring locations within and close to each AQMA, to review the status of these AQMAs

Once the review is completed, these AQMA's can be considered for revocation, unless new results indicate there could be a possibility that results may exceed the statutory air quality objectives.

The recent results indicate that pollution levels have fallen, and it is likely these AQMAs will be considered for revocation in the near future.

- 4.2 **The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)** is contained within the ASR report.

The AQAP highlights that a programme has been implemented to engage with businesses on the Hitchin Industrial Estate, in relation to the EcoStars Programme.

This programme is currently underway, and seeks to engage with local fleet operators based on the industrial park, to review the operation and management of their vehicle fleets to promote the use of more sustainable, lower emission, transport options.

The programme runs until the end of 2022, and a report will be provided following completion, on local engagement with the scheme.

Full details of the scheme can be referenced in the link below:

[ECO Stars - Fleet Recognition Scheme \(ecostars-uk.com\)](https://www.ecostars-uk.com)

5. APPENDICES

None

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 6.1 *Environmental Protection, Roger Pitman, Air Quality Consultant, Direct Dial: 01462 474263; roger.pitman@north-herts.gov.uk*

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Annual Status Report 2021 (included alongside Information Note in the agenda)