

# Air Quality Strategy

(2025 – 2029)

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*Parkland Primary School pupil Elsa Rios Robert with her competition-winning active travel poster*

## 1. Foreword

The quality of the air we breathe affects everyone. We want to ensure that our residents, workers and visitors can breathe the cleanest air possible, and this strategy communicates our vision for improving air quality in Oadby and Wigston over the next four years.

Air quality can also affect the most vulnerable in society, children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions. Additionally, people living in less affluent areas are most exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution.

Oadby and Wigston Borough is situated within the County of Leicestershire and both the city and county place controls on transport and transport routes through our area. This is having a positive effect on local air pollution and the collaborative work benefits our residents.

Since the 1980s air quality has improved significantly in the country. In our area monitoring shows a gradual improvement in air quality in the last few years and we currently have no exceedances of the air quality objectives.

This first air quality strategy has been produced following consultation with the public, our elected members and partners who all agreed that to improve local people's health and wellbeing we can, and should, go further to reduce air pollution. This also meets with the new mandated requirement from the Government that all local authorities should have an air quality strategy for their area. It is clear that local government has an essential role to play in delivering cleaner air for communities and nature right across England.

We are aware that there are health inequalities within the borough and that air quality is poor in these areas, which are often densely populated and suffer with high deprivation.

This strategy covers the whole borough and outlines our collective approach to improving air quality in Oadby and Wigston. It highlights the work we are already doing and focusses on key actions we need to collectively take to drive further improvements. The strategy focuses on improving outdoor air quality but also considers the quality of air indoors within people's homes, workplaces and schools.

The strategy will help us to focus on and deliver the actions required, both by the council and by working with others to continue to make improvements to our air quality.

Councillor Samia Haq

Leader of the Council

Anne Court

Chief Executive

## 2. Introduction

Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental threats to health and it was the focus of the 2022 Chief Medical Officer's report. Air pollution can have negative effects on health throughout our lives.

Short term exposure can make respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease worse. Long term exposure is associated with an increased risk of a number of serious health conditions including respiratory and cardiovascular disease, cancer, depression, dementia and diabetes and can affect foetal development.

Deaths in England linked to air pollution are estimated to be between 26,000 and 38,000 each year. Although air pollution can be harmful to everyone, the most susceptible to the effects of air pollution are typically the young, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions. The Chief Medical Officer reported that it particularly affects people living in more densely populated and polluted areas, which are often associated with areas of higher deprivation. This can widen health inequalities.

Government policies, alongside research and guidance from organisations such as the World Health Organisation, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Chief Medical Officer for England, tell us that there are no safe levels for exposure to air pollution and global and national exposure threshold target levels are being reduced to reflect this. We can and must go further and faster to minimise the impact of air pollution on our health and the local environment.

The World Health Organisation has updated their health-based air quality guideline concentrations, due to a much stronger body of evidence showing how air pollution affects health at lower concentrations. The Government has set legal limits, known as air quality objectives, for air pollution; new lower objective levels have recently been introduced for particulate matter. Local authorities (LAs) in England have duties regarding local air quality management and must regularly review and assess air quality to determine whether objectives are likely to be achieved. As part of these duties all LAs in England are now required to produce an air quality strategy.

As improvements in outdoor air pollution levels occur, indoor air pollution is becoming an increasing proportion of the problem. We spend most of our time indoors, whether we are at work, studying or enjoying leisure activities but we have little control over the air pollution we are exposed to in these settings. Indoor pollution has not been as well studied as outdoor pollution and this should now be a local and national priority, with focus on the reduction of emissions of health harming pollutants indoors.

To inform the development of this strategy, the emerging Leicestershire Air Quality Health Needs Assessment, which is being developed by Public Health at Leicestershire County Council along with this Council recognises that individuals most susceptible to negative health impacts of air pollution exposure are likely to be among the most vulnerable people in society, in some cases with limited power to alter social circumstances or individual-level risk. Taking measures to improve air quality will have positive health benefits, helping to reduce health inequalities across the borough.

Air quality and climate change are inextricably related. Many common air pollutants are also greenhouse gases and therefore reducing air pollution will lessen the warming effect on our

climate. Poor air quality and climate change have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of both humans and the natural environment. This strategy aligns with local and regional actions being taken to address the ecological and climate crisis that we face, by helping to cut climate damaging air pollution locally, in line with global targets. The strategy will sit alongside the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2024.

### ***Why develop a strategy?***

Air quality in Oadby and Wigston has improved significantly since the 1980's and key pollutants currently do not exceed legal limits. However, there are no safe levels of exposure to air pollution and reducing air pollution emissions and exposure to air of poor quality will help to improve the health and wellbeing of people locally. We also know air quality is poorest in areas that have the highest density of population, which are also our areas of highest deprivation. Improving air quality in these areas will therefore help reduce health inequalities in our borough. It is our vision that all people in Oadby and Wigston are able to breathe the cleanest air possible and we have developed this strategy by collaborating with stakeholders across our borough and local people to ensure that it meets and addresses local needs.

We know that not all air pollution in Oadby and Wigston is generated in our area, as pollutants can travel long distances and combine with each other to create different pollutants. Oadby & Wigston Borough is situated within the County of Leicestershire and both the City and County place controls on transport and main transport routes through the area. The main pollutants of concern are those associated with traffic, with several arterial routes in the borough heading towards Leicester City. We will therefore continue to work with our highway authority, Leicestershire County Council, and Leicester City Council to tackle road sourced and transport emissions on a wider scale.

We also need to ensure that our actions to reduce air pollution in our borough do not result in unintended negative consequences.

The implementation of this strategy will support the Councils' Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and the Leicestershire 2019 Air Quality and Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which contains recommendations around the need for the development and co-ordination of interventions that improve local air quality for everyone, not just based around pollution hotspots and AQMAs. This approach was identified as giving potential for the greatest impact on improving health, as air quality can affect the health of our population throughout the life course at any age, and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable contributing to health inequalities.

The strategic objectives of the Councils' Corporate Strategy are:

- Our council
- Our communities
- Our economy
- Our environment
- Our partners

We want to use this opportunity to highlight the significant work that is already being undertaken across the council and by local partners with positive impacts on air quality. We will highlight how we can build on this partnership working.



*Cllr Samia Haq, Leader of OWBC, giving free trees to residents as part of our giveaway*

The Oadby & Wigston Community Health & Wellbeing Plan (2024-27) aims to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents by addressing key priorities such as housing quality, physical and mental health, and social isolation. The Air Quality Strategy directly supports these goals by improving air quality, which is essential for preventing respiratory diseases, enhancing overall health, and reducing health inequalities.

Poor air quality disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, including those with chronic health conditions, children, older adults, and low-income households—aligning with the Plan’s focus on reducing health disparities. By integrating efforts, such as promoting active travel, improving green spaces, and supporting better housing standards, the Air Quality Strategy contributes to creating a healthier environment, reinforcing the Wellbeing Plan’s objectives.

Collaborating across both strategies ensures a joined-up approach that maximizes impact, improves public health, and enhances the quality of life for all residents.

### 3. Aims of the Strategy

The six aims of the Air Quality Strategy are as follows:

<p><b>1. Reduce emissions from transport</b></p>	<p>Minimise emissions from road traffic to lower NO<sub>2</sub> and particulate matter. Improve road networks. Improve public transport access, routes and links.</p>
<p><b>2. Improving the health of children and young people</b></p>	<p>Improving air quality in and around schools. Raise awareness with school children and in schools. Promote other transport alternatives such as park and stride, cycling, walking, minimise idling and congestion from vehicles. Promote eco-schools green flag and school travel plans.</p>
<p><b>3. Raise awareness and influence change</b></p>	<p>Raise awareness through education and support and promote national events and campaigns e.g. clean air day.</p>
<p><b>4. Decrease exposure to air pollutants</b></p>	<p>Provide information to residents, employers, workers and visitors especially those who are more susceptible to the effects of exposure to poor air quality on how to minimise exposure.</p>
<p><b>5. Consider the impact of development on air quality</b></p>	<p>Ensure the air quality impact of development is assessed by the developer. This should be an obligation to ensure improvements are secured to mitigate impacts on local air quality in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>
<p><b>6. Ensure compliance with legislation</b></p>	<p>Fulfil our statutory obligations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local air quality monitoring and reporting requirements</li> <li>• Statutory nuisance and clean air provisions e.g. domestic burning, dark smoke control</li> <li>• Environmental permitting regulations for the regulation of all Part B activities e.g. dry cleaners, smelters and petrol stations</li> </ul>

#### ***Who will we work with?***

Air pollution is everyone's problem. Improvements to air quality cannot be undertaken as a standalone factor, and collaborative working between Local Authority departments including Public Health and Transport, organisations, businesses, and residents is essential, and opportunities must be considered on an ongoing basis as they arise. Oadby and Wigston Borough Council will also continue to work with the other Leicestershire Local Authorities. Most people will be aware of air pollution caused by large industrial sites or major urban road networks. Yet many will be unaware that emissions in their own homes not only

increases their personal exposure to pollutants but contributes significantly to our national emissions. One of the main focuses of the intervention work by the Environmental Health team is around education of the public on the action they can take e.g. unnecessary idling of vehicle engines, heating of homes, to raise awareness and influence change.



*EV chargers in Countesthorpe Road car park, South Wigston*



#### 4. What we have achieved so far and Key Priorities going forward

The table below highlights the key measures and future priorities based on feedback from partners and through the consultation process.

Aim	Implemented measure	Future action
<p><b>1. Reduce emissions from transport</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy Savings Trust report provided for the Council with recommendations of change for the Council's fleet.</li> <li>• Taxi licensing policy changes made to encourage lower emission vehicles.</li> <li>• Proposed CYCLOPS junction off the A6.</li> <li>• Updated the Council's Car Parking Strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement changes with future light fleet vehicles to ensure they are at least euro 6 compliant.</li> <li>• Examine options for future refuse collection vehicles to lower emissions.</li> <li>• Continue to review the taxi licensing policy.</li> <li>• Work with partners to continue to expand the active travel network.</li> <li>• Taxi idling campaign</li> <li>• Expansion of the idling campaign in areas of poorer air quality aimed at the general public, delivery drivers as well as bus companies and other businesses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Improving the health of children and young people</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Children's and Young people Respiratory Group to better understand the prevalence and causes of viral wheeze and asthma in young people.</li> <li>• Parklands Primary School project which focused on numerous initiatives such as WOW tracker, Modeshift STARS, Active Travel month, Learn to Cycle, Anti-idling campaign, Move it March, Gearing you up. to bring about low-cost change and improve air quality outcomes.</li> <li>• Developed school ambassador programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with both secondary and primary schools to promote key messages to help to raise awareness of air quality in and around schools.</li> <li>• Continue to work with public health and the NHS to examine ways of improving data and identifying key future work areas.</li> <li>• To investigate the correlation between air quality and health inequalities to help target future work.</li> <li>• Continue to work with the Air Quality and Health Partnership and contribute to priorities on the Leicestershire Air</li> </ul>

Aim	Implemented measure	Future action
		Quality Health Needs Assessment's Action Plan.
<p><b>3. Raise awareness and influence change</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has adopted a Climate Change Strategy which recognises action to secure wider benefits such as reduced air pollution and greater health and well-being.</li> <li>• Supporting national campaigns and initiatives.</li> <li>• Cycle to work promotion with businesses.</li> <li>• Improving access to air quality information</li> <li>• Supporting households to undertake energy efficiency works, using available grant funding.</li> <li>• Provision of electric charging points in public car parks throughout the borough.</li> <li>• Annual Status Report including monitoring data.</li> <li>• Leading by example e.g. installation of solar panels on Council buildings, cycle to work scheme, hybrid working policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will update climate change delivery plans as appropriate for short term action associated with air quality.</li> <li>• Supporting national campaigns and initiatives.</li> <li>• Continue to educate people and raise awareness on how to reduce emissions, protect health and bring about air quality improvements through campaign work.</li> <li>• Continue to access grants for energy efficiency works for both the private and public sector stock.</li> <li>• Analyse data trends/information to be able to target future campaigns where appropriate, and consider the use of newer monitoring technologies and equipment to support campaign work particularly around woodburning and engine idling.</li> <li>• Provision of reliable and up to date information and advice/signposting relating to air quality</li> <li>• Provision of greater information about walking/cycling routes</li> <li>• Explore use of advertising boards to</li> </ul>

Aim	Implemented measure	Future action
		deliver key messages in the borough. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate through data and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions and behaviour change for better air quality.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Decrease exposure to air pollutants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agile working promotion within the Council</li> <li>• Raising housing standards in the private sector through our Selective Licensing Scheme and both private and public stock through our energy grants programme.</li> <li>• Worked with homeowners, tenants, social housing providers to tackle damp and mould issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and engage with vulnerable populations and the hard to reach</li> <li>• Work with the health system and wider partners to identify vulnerable populations most exposed to indoor air pollution and engage with them.</li> <li>• Encourage more cycling and walking routes</li> <li>• Continue to educate people and raise awareness of how to bring about air quality improvements, for example domestic burning.</li> <li>• Continue to seek energy grants for private and public housing to improve energy efficiency.</li> <li>• Wood burning campaign aimed at educating people about burning suitable fuel and using accredited appliances.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Consider the impact of development on air quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Policy seeks to achieve a net increase of biodiversity and green open spaces across the Borough area</li> <li>• Local Planning policy seeks the increase of tree cover across the entire Borough area</li> <li>• Work with planning to ensure health impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Policy seeks to achieve a net increase of biodiversity and green open spaces across the Borough area</li> <li>• Planning Policy requires sustainable development and active travel in all new development proposals</li> </ul>

Aim	Implemented measure	Future action
	<p>assessments are carried out for major new developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport assessments to promote and encourage sustainable transport options.</li> <li>• Produced construction management plan guidance for developers to ensure odour and dust from demolition and construction activities is controlled during development and regeneration work.</li> <li>• The Council's Local Plan, Policy 5 'Health and Wellbeing' further sets out that development proposals will be required to assess their impact upon existing services and facilities, specifically services and facilities relating to health, social wellbeing, culture and recreation. In addition Spatial Objective 10: 'High quality and Sustainable Design' requires all new development within the Borough, whether it is new build or conversion, to illustrate the highest standards of design and construction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council are preparing a new draft plan which includes Spatial Objective 10: 'Climate Change' to mitigate and adapt to climate change and support the Borough to transition to net zero carbon by 2050.</li> <li>• Continue to assess planning applications for air quality impact, to ensure developments, wherever possible, secure improvements to or mitigate the impacts on air quality.</li> <li>• Continue to ensure development accords with the local plan.</li> <li>• Look to establish a strategic framework by which air quality considerations are at the heart of council policies, procedures and decisions.</li> <li>• Reinforce electric vehicle standards in building regulations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Ensure compliance with legislation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal review of local air quality monitoring compiled into the Air Quality Annual Status Report submitted to Defra.</li> <li>• Enforcement of legislation in relation to statutory nuisance e.g. smoke from premises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To continue to fulfil our duties and take action as appropriate in line with our Enforcement Policy, legislation and best practice guidance.</li> <li>• To review and consider the use of smoke control areas within the borough to reduce</li> </ul>

Aim	Implemented measure	Future action
	<p>and chimneys and garden bonfires.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforcement of clean air act requirements as appropriate.</li> <li>• Environmental permitting regulation to control emission to air based on risk.</li> <li>• Work closely with the Environment Agency on Part A1 installations where there are likely to detrimentally affect air quality (e.g. refineries, process industries etc.).</li> <li>• Regulation of dark smoke offences for industrial processes and businesses.</li> </ul>	<p>emissions of smoke from chimneys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminding allotment holders that bonfires are only used when absolutely necessary and providing advice on what should, and should not, be burned.</li> <li>• Review all permits to ensure they are in line with 'best available techniques'.</li> <li>• Engage with famers to encourage them to follow the Defra Code of Good Practice for reducing Ammonia Emissions.</li> </ul>

## 5. Monitoring progress

The main indicator that will be used to review the effectiveness of the strategy relates to monitored pollutants and downward trends being shown in monitoring results.

Continued effort will be made to maintain and expand our monitoring network as necessary. While air quality data is one aspect, the growth of the electric charge point network, use of public transport and implementation of cycle routes are other examples which demonstrate how the Borough is changing and making improvements for the better.

The Government is committed to drive down emissions and has adopted reduction targets for five of the most damaging pollutants including nitrogen oxides and PM2.5. The work outlined by this Strategy will contribute to this by taking action at a local level. Success can only however be measured on a national level, with the main influences likely to come from wider government policy decisions. Notwithstanding this, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council is committed to playing their part and improving air quality. Further consideration will be given to how we can monitor the impact of our air quality campaign work going forward, including consideration of newer technologies and equipment such as mobile sensors. The progress made with the priorities and actions identified within the strategy will be reported in the Air Quality Annual Status Report's.



*Brocks Hill Country Park, Oadby, receiving the Green Flag Award*

## **6. Review of the Strategy**

The Air Quality Strategy will be kept under review, with the proposal to update the publication after four years, and will take into account the following:

- Changes to relevant air quality legislation, regulations, including National Strategies/Policies/guidance,
- Introduction of new legislation or regulations,
- Changes in local circumstances, such as the introduction of any Air Quality Management Areas, or smoke control areas
- Introduction of new sources of emissions,
- Updates or changes to existing Council policy or guidance impacting upon air quality,
- Updates on progress concerning key priorities,
- Changes to key priorities including identification of any new priorities,
- Review of future actions.

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