

Dudley MBC's Draft Air Quality Action Plan Consultation

Position Statement December 2010

Introduction

This is a summary of the consultation process carried out for the Dudley borough Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The AQAP sets out how the Council will work towards improving air quality, particularly with regard to reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide, NO₂, in areas of the borough where the national air quality objective is exceeded.

The draft AQAP was submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs in February 2010. Defra's response endorsed the approach used and contained a number of useful suggestions and proposals which are being considered for further development of the document.

Following Defra's appraisal the draft AQAP was presented to and debated by Council Members and other interested parties at the Select Committee on the Environment and the Council's five Area Committees.

The Consultation Programme

On the 1st September 2010 Dudley MBC commenced a consultation programme which sought further input from a wider stakeholder audience. The consultation period ended on the 30th November 2010.

Copies of the action plan and promotional leaflets were distributed to all of the borough libraries and leisure centres and promotional material was displayed in the Dudley Matters magazine and other strategic locations including the offices of Dudley Council Plus.

In addition the Council wrote to:-

- Over 900 residents and local businesses with properties located in or close to areas where the air quality objective for NO₂ is exceeded.
- Over 100 external stakeholders including trade associations, non government organisations, utilities companies, professional institutions, transport and health care service providers, local Members of Parliament and environmental interest groups.

The AQAP proposals were also discussed at a number of stakeholder working groups including the Dudley Strategic Housing Environmental Partnership, The Dudley Climate change Group, The West Midlands Air Quality Group and with Dudley MBC Highways, Land Use and Transport Planning Officers. The plan was also publicised via a number of launch events associated with the Dudley Healthy Towns Programme during October 2010.

Stakeholder Input

The consultation programme generated a range of comments and suggestions which fell into the following categories:-

- Minor changes to wording including simplification of jargon
- Local transport and congestion issues
- Policy issues
- Strategic issues
- The identification of strengths and weaknesses
- Funding issues

The Council has provided a response to all consultation comments. Some of the suggestions have been dismissed on the basis of cost or viability and where this is the case, appropriate justification has been provided to the stakeholder.

Revision of the Draft Air Quality Action Plan

The issues that are to be further considered for inclusion or amendment of the draft AQAP are listed below:-

1. Improving the Health Agenda by incorporating links to cycling and walking initiatives and the associated infrastructure
2. Strengthening emphasis on low emission strategies
3. Doing more to raise awareness of air quality issues amongst local transport providers
4. To evaluate green strategies and tree planting programmes for air quality benefits
5. Providing better links between the action plan and The Council's emerging Area Action Plans which define regeneration strategies for key areas within the borough
6. To assess specific local traffic congestion issues including parking enforcement, traffic light sequencing and carriageway markings raised by some respondents
7. Developing a Supplementary Planning Policy Document to generate funding for future air quality improvement initiatives
8. Providing better information on action plan timescales and how future progress will be measured
9. Providing better links between the Council's air quality, climate change and carbon management activities

In addition to the consultation comments the plan also needs to be revised to accommodate:-

- Evaluation of the Coalition Government's revised agenda and its impacts on the local and wider policy framework
- Changes to national and local funding streams and their impact on actions contained within the plan

Once amendments are completed, the revised document will be resubmitted to Defra and formal adoption of the Action Plan by the Council will be progressed with a target completion date of July 2011.