
Date: February 2019

Subject: Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan

1 Why is an Air Quality Action Plan needed?

The Government has identified Coventry as one of the towns and cities in the UK where Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels breach legal limits. The Action Plan is needed to identify how NO₂ levels will be reduced to within the legal limit as soon as possible.

2 Will I be charged to bring my vehicle into Coventry?

The Action Plan that has been submitted to Government by the City Council does not propose any charges for people to enter the city, whatever vehicle they may drive. The Action Plan does contain a range of measures that will encourage people to walk, cycle or get the bus or train to travel into the city, and also to encourage taxi and bus operators, and businesses, to improve their vehicles to low or zero emission standard.

Other cities, such as Birmingham or Leeds, are introducing Clean Air Zones (CAZ), where older vehicles that do not meet set emission standards will be charged for entering a specified area. Coventry's submitted Action Plan does not contain a CAZ.

3 Will any changes to road layouts be introduced?

Yes. The Action Plan includes a range of highway schemes that are intended to make traffic flow more freely and reduce queuing and congestion at key locations, including Holyhead Road. These measures may include improvements at Spon End and Ring Road Junction 7, the removal of the Holyhead Road / Barras Lane traffic lights, and the potential closure of the Coundon Road level crossing to traffic.

4 Will there be consultation on these highway proposals?

Yes. Statutory processes will need to be completed before measures such as the closure of a level crossing or the construction of a significant road improvement can be undertaken, and this includes formal consultation. These consultations will take place later in 2019 once preliminary design work has been undertaken. Other options can and will be considered if these can be demonstrated to have the same impact on improving air quality at the locations which breach the legal limits.

5 What improvements are proposed for pedestrians and cyclists?

The Action Plan includes the construction of four high quality cycle routes, with cyclists separated from traffic, which would connect the city centre with Coundon, Binley / Hospital,

Allesley and the University of Warwick. The Spon End and Ring Road improvements will also provide a more direct and attractive walking route between Spon End and the centre.

In addition, the Council will work with schools, businesses and local communities to deliver initiatives that will help people walk and cycle more for local journeys. These initiatives will include bike share schemes, improved cycle parking, training schemes and other support.

6 Is anything being done to make it easier to run electric vehicles?

Yes. The Council is already investing heavily in new electric vehicle charge points in the city centre and surrounding residential areas. Installation of these is underway, with around 100 charge points being installed. In addition, a scheme to incentivise local taxi drivers to go electric has been successful in getting electric taxis onto the local network, and the City Council has recently secured funding for the purchase of new electric buses to operate within the city, working in partnership with National Express and Transport for West Midlands

7 How will the Action Plan be funded?

Government funding is available for the implementation of Local Air Quality Action Plans. The Council has submitted a Business Case to Government outlining the funding required to implement the Action Plan, and it is expected that a decision on this will be made by Government later this year.

Any funding given to Coventry City Council by the government for the Local Air Quality Action Plan can only be used by the Council to implement the Air Quality Action Plan and is not allowed to be used for other services in Coventry.

8 What are the next steps in developing the Action Plan?

The Government has considered, and provided feedback on, the Business Case, and we are now reviewing the Action Plan. This will take account of the amount of funding awarded to the Council by the Government to deliver the Plan, and any feedback on the individual elements of the Plan.

9 How is the Air Quality monitored?

A network of monitoring stations covers the city, providing data that is used to assess the level of NO₂ in the atmosphere.

This data, along with traffic count information, is also used to model and predict both traffic and air quality conditions for the current year and for future years.

10 Does the modelling take account of future development?

Yes, all development with planning permission and / or allocated in the Council's adopted Local Plan are included within the future year modelling. This includes development both within the city and in neighbouring local authority areas. Background traffic growth is also taken into account. The modelling work is being assessed by Government as part of the Business Case.

11 What harm is caused by poor air quality?

Air pollution has harmful effects on human health, the economy and the environment. It is the largest environmental risk to the public's health, contributing to cardiovascular disease, lung cancer and respiratory diseases. It reduces life expectancy for the whole population, but risks of premature death are higher for people who are already vulnerable, as it has a disproportionate impact on the young, older people, people with long term conditions and those living in more deprived areas. The Council has been focused on ensuring that this package brings wider community and economic benefits to the city in addition to the public health benefits that would result from achieving Nitrogen Dioxide compliance.

12 Why do the proposals only focus on road transport?

Road transport (and in particular, older diesel vehicles) is widely recognised as the most significant source of nitrogen dioxide pollution (where people are exposed to pollution) and studies have confirmed this to be the case in Coventry. Focusing efforts on this source is therefore likely to achieve the quickest and most significant improvement in NO₂ levels within the city.

13 Why does the plan only mention work to improve nitrogen dioxide levels and not work to improve other dangerous air pollutants like particulate matter?

The Government has identified Coventry as needing to create an Action Plan to identify how nitrogen dioxide levels will be reduced to within the legal limit as soon as possible. Any money made available by the Government will be for work to tackle nitrogen dioxide levels only, however many of the measures suggested will contribute toward lowering other harmful air pollutants too.