

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This Action Plan has been developed as part of the ongoing Review and Assessment of air quality in their area that Local Authorities are required to undertake as a statutory duty under the Environment Act 1995, Part IV. Local Authorities are required to assess the present and likely future air quality against the air quality objectives of seven main pollutants, prescribed in the Air Quality Regulations 1997. Where the objectives are unlikely to be met, the Local Authority must designate an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and detail an Action Plan for improvements in air quality within the designated AQMA.

In October 2001, the London Borough of Waltham Forest designated the whole borough an AQMA for the pollutants of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and respirable particles (PM10). A comprehensive 3-stage review and assessment determined that the objective levels for these pollutants would not be met along certain roads in the borough. The Stage 4 Review and Assessment confirmed this and in particular, the annual mean NO₂ objective is the more stringent of the objectives that need to be met.

The Stage 4 review and assessment investigates further the source contributions of NO_x and PM10 at a series of locations throughout the borough. The source contributions of NO_x were determined rather than NO₂; as NO₂ is mostly a secondary pollutant formed due to atmospheric chemistry. The results of this source apportionment modelling work determined that, depending on the location, a reduction of between 2.7µg/m³ to 19.1 µg/m³ is required for NO₂ levels to meet the objective by 2005 and between 50% – 80% of NO_x contributions are related to road transport.

A Low Emission Zone (LEZ) scenario was also modelled. A LEZ is a defined area, which can only be entered by vehicles meeting certain emission standards. The results indicated that with an LEZ in place, for NO₂ levels there is a predicted improvement of between 4.39µg/m³ and 12µg/m³. However, even with an LEZ in place, further measures are required borough wide in order to achieve the objective levels.

It is widely accepted that effective management of vehicle movements on the borough roads is required in order to reduce the impact of air pollution. The introduction of a London Wide LEZ is singularly the most effective action towards achieving the Government's air quality objectives. It has been estimated that a significant reduction in traffic levels is required in order that the London Borough of Waltham Forest can meet the Government's air quality objectives. Conversely, by tackling emissions at source, such as new, cleaner vehicle technology and cleaner fuels, on board diagnostics and computer control technology to improve engine efficiency and reduce the number of vehicles on the roads, will have a significant impact in working towards the pollutant objectives. However, policies such as the recently introduced Congestion charging zone in central London is estimated to increase traffic flows along the North Circular route and adjacent roads by at least 5%. The proposed Ikea development in the neighbouring borough of Enfield will increase traffic by a further 3% and the average annual traffic increase in vehicles on roads is widely accepted at 3%. These increases, along with others, such as the Stratford City Development and the proposed Lee Valley Olympic Development, highlight the conflict between the various strategies and policies in place.

This action plan not only provides a framework for developing initiatives to improve air quality in the borough but also brings together actions and initiatives taking place on a local and national level. There are six main objectives of this Air Quality Action Plan:

- Demonstrate the council's commitment to improving air quality
- Provide an overview of local key policies with respect to air quality
- Improve air quality while maintaining economic stability and to explore wider economic opportunities.
- Involve all relevant council departments and external agencies where appropriate, to ensure a balanced and integrated approach.
- Engage everyone who lives, works and travels in and through Waltham Forest.
- To improve the quality of life and health of the residents and workforce in Waltham Forest.

Identified in this Action plan is a wide range of proposals aimed at improving air quality in Waltham Forest, tabulated in Section 5. The actions are listed under 5 main headings, with those actions having a direct impact on improving air quality in Waltham Forest listed first, to those actions which will have an indirect impact on improving air quality, such as policy measures. The actions are also prioritised in terms of cost and improvement in air quality

It is envisaged that the actions scheduled in this action plan will engage everyone who lives, works and travels through the London Borough of Waltham Forest.