

Essex Air Quality Strategy

Action Plan

July 2025



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This strategy has been developed collaboratively by representatives from the following councils in Essex:



The strategy is also supported by the following anchor partner organisations:



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The Essex Air Quality Strategy has been jointly developed by all of the district, borough and city councils in Essex, as well as Essex County Council and the two unitary councils, Southend and Thurrock. We work together as part of the Essex Air Quality Consortium, under the banner of EssexAir, to improve air quality.

While we acknowledge the proposals for local government reorganisation in Essex, regardless of the potential future make-up of local government in Essex, there remains significant support for a new Essex Air Quality Strategy. It is felt there will still be a need for local authorities in Essex to work collaboratively on the subject of air quality to ensure maximum impact and make best use of the collective resources available.

A number of the councils already have local air quality action plans or strategies. The new Essex Air Quality Strategy aims to complement these and provide an overarching strategy for the whole county. The local air quality action plans and strategies are available in the local authorities section of the EssexAir website.

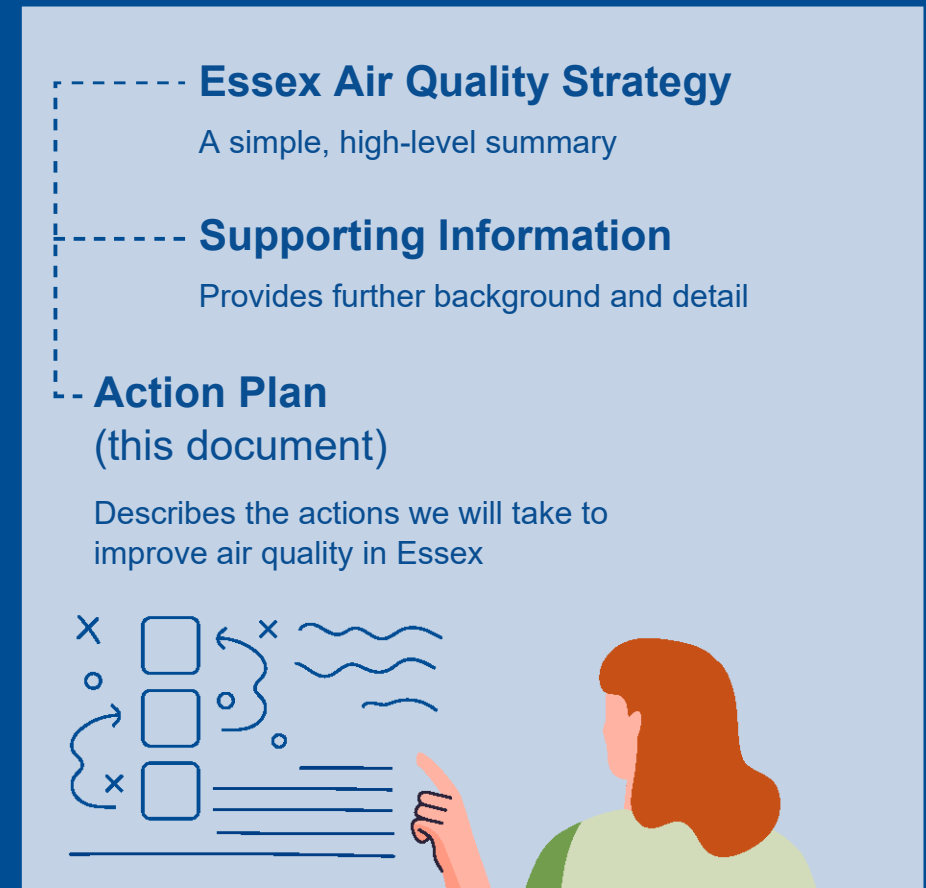
This action plan outlines the actions we propose to take to improve air quality and how progress will be measured. It will be a live document, which will be updated as needed.

There are two further documents aligned to the Essex Air Quality Strategy:

1. **Essex Air Quality Strategy:** a summary document which is intended for all audiences. It gives a high level summary of the reasons why action is needed, what is already being done to improve air quality in Essex and the actions we propose to take to further improve air quality.
2. **Supporting Information:** provides background information, describes the current air quality situation in Essex and how air quality is expected to change in the future, and identifies potential opportunities to improve air quality. It is intended for those who want to know about air quality in Essex in greater detail.

All three documents are available online at: www.essexair.org.uk/strategy

Through a public consultation from January to March 2025, we asked for feedback on a draft version of the Essex Air Quality Strategy. We have used this feedback to help us improve and finalise the strategy.



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Our proposals

Actions and tasks that we propose to take or continue to take, aimed at improving air quality in Essex, are summarised below. These actions have been grouped under each of the four aims of this strategy. Desired outcomes are also set out as well as the methods by which it is anticipated that progress will be measured, along with the anticipated mechanism(s) through which these actions would be delivered.

As illustrated below, some of these tasks are expected to be delivered via, or supported by, existing policies and programmes. However, where it is expected that specific, additional activities will be undertaken, the “Essex Air Quality Strategy” has been stated as the delivery mechanism.

We will do what is within our power as local authorities to improve air quality in Essex

Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism(s)
We will encourage, enable and support the use of public transport and active travel modes, particularly for shorter trips or where they form a part of a longer journey in Essex	Local transport strategies and plans will be developed to encourage, enable and support the use of public transport and active travel modes in Essex	Increased use of public transport and active travel modes	Bus passenger, cycling and walking statistics	Essex County Council's Safer, Greener, Healthier Programme Future Transport Strategies Local Transport Plans
	Where possible, specific measures will be introduced to encourage, enable and support changes in travel behaviours (e.g. improved cycling infrastructure)	Implementation of measures to encourage and support use of public transport and active travel modes	Review of schemes implemented in Essex	Essex Cycling Strategy Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans Parking strategies

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Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism(s)
	Seek policies that require the provision of sustainable and active travel modes	Inclusion of appropriate policies within relevant policy documents	Reviews of relevant plans and planning policy documents	Local Plans, other planning policy documents and Infrastructure Delivery Plans
	We will work with public transport providers such as bus operators to maintain and, where possible, improve public transport provision in Essex	Increased patronage of public transport in Essex	Bus patronage figures	Bus Service Improvement Plans
We will lead by example by reducing the impact of our activities on air quality	Where practicable and cost effective to do so, we will install electric vehicle charging points at our key properties	Increased number of electric vehicle charging points at relevant properties	Number of electric vehicle charging points at relevant properties	Internal Plans, Policies and Procedures
	Where suitable, we will introduce electric vehicles into our vehicle fleet, and encourage our partners to do the same	Increased numbers of electric vehicles in local authority vehicle fleet	Number of electric vehicles in local authority vehicle fleet	Internal Plans, Policies and Procedures
	We will continue to promote our own travel plans, encouraging and supporting sustainable travel to work	Increase in proportion of local authority staff travelling to work using sustainable transport	Proportion of local authority staff travelling to work by sustainable transport modes	Internal Plans, Policies and Procedures
	We will promote our Cycle to Work schemes, and our pool bike offers	Increase in proportion of local authority staff travelling to work by bike	Proportion of local authority staff travelling to work by bike	Internal Plans, Policies and Procedures

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Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism(s)
	We will ensure appropriate reference is made to this strategy when developing new policies and plans within Essex, and that these emerging plans and policies are consistent with the aims and objectives of this strategy	Inclusion of appropriate policies within relevant policy documents	Reviews of plans and planning policy documents	Relevant policies and plans
	Wherever possible we will align our public health, air quality and climate action activities and plans to maximise mutually beneficial outcomes	Actions and plans which benefit health, air quality and climate	Reviews of relevant actions and plans	Relevant activities and plans
	Where possible, we will seek to reduce or limit emissions to air from the buildings we own and/or manage, construction plant and equipment used on our projects and waste management activities undertaken on our behalf	Identification of opportunities to limit or reduce emissions from buildings, construction plant and equipment and waste management activities under our control	Record of identified opportunities	Essex Air Quality Strategy
We will seek to encourage, enable and support the uptake of low emission and electric vehicles in Essex	We will encourage and support the placement of additional electric charging points while maintaining our position that travelling by active or sustainable means is always preferable, where possible	Increase in number of journeys made by electric vehicles	Number and locations of electric vehicle charging points in Essex	Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy
	We will work with the private and public sectors to ensure Essex’s EV Strategy vision of delivering “the right charger in the right place” is achieved	Increase in number of journeys made by electric vehicles	Number and locations of electric vehicle charging points in Essex	Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy

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Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism(s)
	We will work with local bus, taxi and private hire operators to help them improve their vehicle fleets and improve air quality. This may, for example, include identifying opportunities to obtain funding for vehicle upgrades or additional electric charging points	An improved local bus, taxi and private hire vehicle fleet with lower emissions	Bus fleet composition data from bus operators Details of locally registered taxis and private hire vehicles (where available)	Bus Service Improvement Plan Essex Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy Taxi and private hire licensing conditions
	Where relevant, we will consider the air quality impacts and benefits of alternatively fuelled vehicles (e.g. hydrogen) and (if appropriate) support organisations or individuals seeking to trial such technologies in Essex	Evidence of the performance and benefits of alternatively fuelled vehicles	Records of trials and investigations	Essex Air Quality Strategy
We will look to install multifunctional green infrastructure in appropriate locations in Essex with the aim of improving air quality	We will implement green infrastructure at locations in Essex, with reference to Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework and where it is appropriate to do so, to improve air quality, and encourage and support others to do the same	Implementation of green infrastructure in Essex and/or as part of our projects	Record of green infrastructure implemented	Essex Air Quality Strategy Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy Relevant projects
	Consideration will also be given to incorporating green infrastructure aimed at improving air quality into the design of Essex highway schemes and associated public realm to encourage modal shift away from car journeys	Implementation of green infrastructure at roadside locations and/or as part of our projects	Record of green infrastructure implemented	Essex Air Quality Strategy Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy Relevant projects

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Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism(s)
We will identify, seek funding for and implement measures to reduce air pollutant emissions, particularly in areas of Essex with poor air quality	Identify potential solutions and help determine which options are likely to have the most impact and be most practical and cost-effective to implement	Identification and assessment of potential air quality interventions	Reviews of potential interventions considered and lessons learned	Essex Air Quality Strategy
	Where possible, sources of funding will be identified and/or lobbied for to implement the measures, which in many cases is likely to involve seeking external sources of funding, e.g. the Defra Air Quality Grant	Obtaining funding to implement air quality interventions	Results of Defra Air Quality Grant	Essex Air Quality Strategy
	We will seek policies in Local Plans, other planning policy documents, and Infrastructure Delivery Plans that require funding / infrastructure, that seek the inclusion of measures aimed at reducing emissions and improving air quality	Inclusion of appropriate policies within relevant policy documents	Reviews of plans and planning policy documents	Local Plans, other planning policy documents and Infrastructure Delivery Plans
	We will collaboratively review the implications of new air quality standards and policy as and when these are published	Co-ordinated and consistent response to publication of relevant standards and policy	Record of steering group meetings	Essex Air Quality Strategy

Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism(s)
We will work together to monitor and assess air quality and seek to improve air quality monitoring in Essex	<p>We will work together to develop a co-ordinated approach to air quality monitoring in Essex to make best use of available resources. This will involve undertaking a review of monitoring requirements</p> <p>Particular attention will be given to how best to measure concentrations of PM_{2.5} given the importance of this pollutant in terms of public health and the relatively small number of existing monitoring sites in Essex</p> <p>Funding opportunities will also be identified, e.g. the Defra Air Quality Grant</p>	Recommendations for future air quality monitoring in Essex	Number of monitoring sites of different types in Essex and data collected	Essex Air Quality Strategy

We will limit or reduce the impact of new development and transport infrastructure on air quality

Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism
We will limit or reduce the adverse impacts of developments on air quality and seek to minimise new exposure to air pollution	Investigate the feasibility of producing joint air quality planning guidance for Essex, including recommended mitigation measures	Review of relevant air quality related planning policy, feasibility assessment and recommendations	N/A	Essex Air Quality Strategy
	The impacts of new development on air quality will be carefully assessed during the preparation of new Local Plans and the consideration of planning applications	Reduced impacts on air quality as a result of new Local Plans and other development	Review of environmental assessments of Local Plans and planning decisions	Assessments of Local Plans and planning applications

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Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism
	<p>Ensuring that larger developments and Garden communities in Essex:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are located where they maximise the efficient use of existing and committed infrastructure and are served by a mix of services and facilities which are more accessible by walking, cycling and public transport encourage and support the use of sustainable transport modes, for example by improving the public realm and implementing facilities such as mobility hubs to encourage and support walking, cycling and the use of public transport, rather than private cars 	Increased use of public transport and active travel modes	Review of development proposals	Assessments of Local Plans Essex Design Guide
	We will require the provision for electric charging points to be made for all proposed car parking spaces, associated with residential, non-residential and commercial development proposals, as set out in the latest government guidance and standards	Increase in number of journeys made by electric vehicles	Number of electric vehicle charging points in Essex	Building Regulations

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Action	Task	Desired outcome(s)	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism
	We will develop toolkits to promote sustainable development and reduce transport related impacts on air quality, including walkable neighbourhood design guides and appropriate parking standards and travel plan guidance for large developments and garden communities	Development and publication of toolkits and guidance	N/A	Essex Design Guide
	We will seek to ensure all new buildings are constructed to net zero carbon standards in operation (thereby reducing heating emissions and improving indoor air quality)	Reduced emissions to air from new buildings and improved indoor air quality	Number of buildings constructed to net zero carbon standards in operation	Planning Policy Position for Net Zero Carbon Development Homes and Buildings in Essex Local Plans and associated planning documents
We will limit or reduce the impact of new transport infrastructure on air quality	We will seek to reduce the impact of new highways and transport schemes on air quality and, where possible, achieve improvements in air quality when designing and implementing such schemes	Reduced negative impacts on or improvements in air quality as a result of new highways and transport schemes	Review of environmental assessments of relevant schemes	Highways and transport infrastructure projects

We will work closely with a range of stakeholders to improve air quality

Action	Task	Desired outcome	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism
We will work with relevant partner organisations, as well as local communities, to improve air quality	We will continue to engage with organisations which generate substantial volumes of road traffic movements in Essex, e.g. schools, the National Health Service, commercial premises, developers and workplaces, to raise awareness of the contribution made by road traffic to air pollution and the actions that can be taken to reduce emissions	Reduced road transport emissions	Record of relevant communications and engagement	ECC's Safer, Greener, Healthier Programme Essex Air Quality Strategy
	We will engage with National Highways regarding those locations within Essex affected by emissions from the Strategic Road Network (i.e. motorways and major A roads)	Reduced road transport emissions	Record of relevant communications and engagement	Essex Air Quality Strategy
	We will continue to engage with workplaces and schools to encourage the use of active travel and public transport, as opposed to private cars, developing travel plans which include a focus on improving air quality and which promote a traffic free environment around schools	Reduced road transport emissions associated with workplaces and schools	Record of relevant communications and engagement Number of travel plans developed	Safer, Greener, Healthier Programme Essex Air Quality Strategy

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Action	Task	Desired outcome	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism
	We will engage with relevant representatives of major non-road sources of air pollutant emissions in Essex such as ports, airports, industrial and energy generation facilities and the agricultural industry	Reduced emissions associated with ports, airports, industrial and energy generation facilities and the agricultural industry	Record of relevant communications and engagement and actions taken	Essex Air Quality Strategy
We will regularly engage with each other, Essex Anchor Organisations and other relevant stakeholders in Essex, regarding air quality related issues and seek to develop and implement Essex-wide air quality initiatives	<p>An air quality working group will be convened on a regular basis, attended by representatives from ECC, district, borough and city councils, unitary authorities, Essex Anchor Organisations and other relevant stakeholders in Essex, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share the latest knowledge regarding air quality issues in Essex • report on progress made on relevant air quality initiatives, including lessons learned • discuss recent developments in air quality policy and technical innovations • develop Essex wide air quality initiatives 	Sharing of knowledge and best practice	Records of working group meetings and/or activities	Essex Air Quality Strategy

We will raise awareness about air quality in our communities, including measures to improve indoor air quality

Action	Task	Desired outcome	Monitoring method	Delivery Mechanism
We will raise public awareness of air quality issues in Essex and the impacts of poor air quality on human health	We will periodically update and add new information to the updated EssexAir website (www.essexair.org.uk) and, by doing so, make air quality data and information more readily accessible and understandable to the residents of Essex	Additional and updated content on EssexAir website	Record of updates and additions to EssexAir website	Essex Air Quality Strategy
	<p>We will seek to raise awareness of, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the impact of air quality on human health the impact of road traffic emissions on air quality the impact of domestic combustion of gas and solid fuels (such as wood) on both outdoor and indoor air quality other factors that influence indoor air quality and actions that can be taken to improve indoor air quality the linkages between air quality and climate change, and resulting impacts on human health 	Increased awareness of the impact of air quality on human health, sources of emissions and factors affecting indoor air quality	Record of communications with the public, schools, community groups and relevant stakeholders	Essex Air Quality Strategy

Monitoring and evaluation

Key performance indicators

The following key performance indicators (KPIs) are proposed to monitor and evaluate the overall progress made in improving air quality in Essex over the timescales of this strategy:

- The number of measured exceedances of the level of the current annual mean NO₂ Air Quality Objective (recognising that some of these locations may not be representative of locations of relevant exposure)
- Whether the annual mean NO₂ air quality Limit Value is monitored or modelled to be exceeded in Essex
- Average measured NO₂ and PM_{2.5} concentrations across all roadside monitoring sites in Essex
- Average measured PM_{2.5} concentrations across all background monitoring sites in Essex

These KPIs will be updated on an annual basis, with the current status of these KPIs for the most recent year for which data are available summarised in **Table 1**.

It should be noted, however, that pollutant concentrations may vary significantly from one year to the next, due to the influence of

meteorological conditions (such as wind speed, wind direction and temperature). As such, it is normal practice to only consider a trend as being significant when five years' worth of data are available. Progress against these KPIs will therefore be assessed over the longer term, rather than from one year to the next.

KPI	Year	Value
1. Number of measured exceedances of level of annual mean NO ₂ Air Quality Objective	2023	4 (<1%)
2. Any measured or modelled exceedances of annual mean NO ₂ air quality Limit Value at relevant roadside locations in Essex?	2023	Yes
3. Average measured NO ₂ concentration at roadside sites (µg/m ³)	2023	21.2
4. Average measured PM _{2.5} concentration at roadside sites (µg/m ³)	2023	12.5
5. Average measured PM _{2.5} concentration at urban background sites (µg/m ³)	2023	8.0

Table 1 Key Performance Indicators

Reporting

It is proposed that a short progress update will be produced on a regular basis summarising the progress that has been made in implementing actions to improve air quality in Essex and to report progress against the KPIs listed above.

Glossary

Term	Description
Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)	A plan setting out the actions that will be taken at a local level to improve air quality within an Air Quality Management Area.
Air quality Limit Value	Legally binding limits for concentrations in outdoor air of major air pollutants that impact public health. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has responsibility for meeting the Limit Values in England and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) co-ordinates assessment and air quality plans for the UK as a whole.
Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)	Local authorities in the UK are required to review air quality in their area and designate Air Quality Management Areas in those areas where Air Quality Objectives set by the UK government are exceeded.
Air Quality Objective	An air quality standard (i.e. a concentration of a particular pollutant recorded over a given time period) set by the UK government, which if exceeded, district, borough, city councils and unitary authorities are required to work towards achieving.
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
ECC	Essex County Council.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator.
NO ₂	Nitrogen dioxide.
NO _x	Nitrogen oxides.
PM _{2.5}	Particulate matter less than 2.5 µm in diameter.
µg/m ³	Microgrammes (one-millionth of a gramme) per cubic meter air.

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