

CLEAN AIR FOR EVERY COMMUNITY

Barking and Dagenham
Draft Local Air Quality Strategy
2026 – 2035



OUR VISION:

Clean air for every community

OUR AIMS:

- Reduce air pollution and people's exposure to it
- Tackle unequal impacts
- Ensure that Barking and Dagenham's growth and development supports healthier air

UNDERSTAND • INFLUENCE • REDUCE • PROTECT • PREVENT

NITROGEN DIOXIDE (NO₂)

What is it?



NO₂

Has the chemical formula NO₂, meaning it has two oxygen atoms and one nitrogen atom.

NO_x

One of a group of gases called nitrogen oxides (NO_x).

Red-brown in colour, but colourless in our air as it is very diluted.

Released by burning fossil fuels and wood.

PARTICULATE MATTER (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

What is it?



Solid dust particles and liquid droplets.

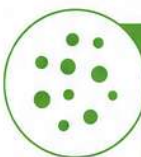
PM₁₀
PM_{2.5}

PM₁₀ is dust up to 10 µm wide.
PM_{2.5} is dust up to 2.5 µm wide.

Contains a mixture of different chemicals, some of which are harmful to human health.

HOW AIR POLLUTION CAN AFFECT YOUR HEALTH

Small particles and gases in the air can get into your body and cause harm.



PARTICULATE MATTER (PM₁₀)

These are larger particles that can get into your nose, throat and lungs.

Can increase your risks of:

- Irritated eyes, nose and throat
- Breathing difficulties and asthma attacks
- Heart and lung disease over time



FINE PARTICULATE MATTER (PM_{2.5})

These are very small particles that can go deep into your lungs and even into your bloodstream.

Can increase your risks of:

- Breathing difficulties and asthma attacks
- Heart disease and stroke
- Dying earlier from heart or lung disease

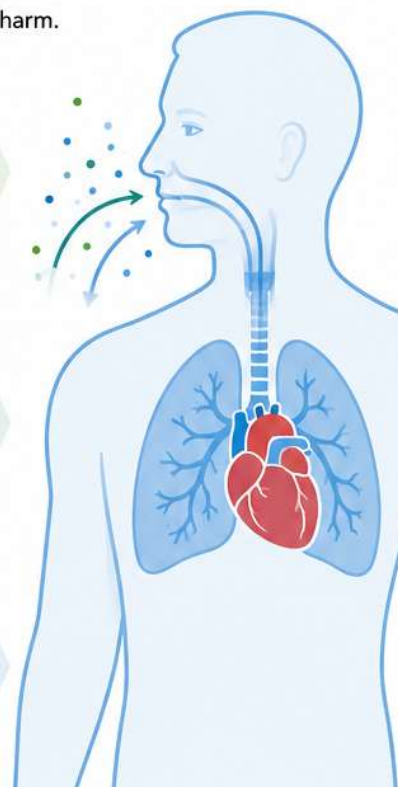


NITROGEN DIOXIDE (NO₂)

This gas can irritate your airways and lungs.

Can increase your risks of:

- Breathing difficulties
- Inflamed airways and more infections
- More chest infections in children



Walk, wheel or cycle

Use public transport

Keep engines off when stationary

Support greener choices

Protect our communities and our health

About this strategy

This Local Air Quality Strategy sets the long-term direction for cleaner air in Barking and Dagenham. It is deliberately concise. It explains why cleaner air matters, the outcomes the Council is seeking, and the principles that will guide decisions across the organisation and with partners.

It sits above, and is distinct from, the Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). This Strategy provides the strategic 'why', and the AQAP sets out the current 'what' and 'how' through specific measures, owners, timescales and delivery arrangements. Annual Status Reports (ASRs) provide the evidence: what has happened, what monitoring shows and what needs to change.

This Strategy is intended to guide enduring success through our delivery programmes to 2035 whilst allowing actions, technology, evidence and local priorities to evolve.

Contents

1. Executive summary
2. Clean air for every community
3. Why air quality matters in Barking and Dagenham
4. What shapes our air
5. Our five strategic principles
6. Three LBBD commitments
7. Clean air in Council decisions
8. From strategy to action
9. Measuring progress and keeping the strategy 'live'
10. Governance and partnership
11. Strategic outcomes to 2035
12. References and supporting documents

1. Executive summary

Air quality has improved substantially over time, but air pollution remains an important environmental and public health risk. For Barking and Dagenham this issue is inseparable from health inequalities, major roads and traffic, freight and servicing, industrial activity, development and regeneration, and the choices that shape how people and goods move around the borough.

Barking and Dagenham was designated an Air Quality Management Area for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀) in 2008. The Council monitors air quality throughout the year and has used successive action plans and annual reporting to address pollution. Road transport is the borough's main source of atmospheric pollutants, with significant industrial sources in the south of the borough and close to its boundaries.

This strategy deliberately goes beyond a narrow test of statutory compliance. Cleaner air is fundamentally about reducing harmful exposure, preventing avoidable pollution, improving health and creating places in which healthier choices are easier.

Our ambition is simple: clean air for every community.

Our strategic approach

Principle	What it means
UNDERSTAND	Use monitoring, evidence, technology and community intelligence to understand pollution, communicate it locally and meaningfully, engage communities and elected members, and support informed behaviour change.
INFLUENCE	Use Council leadership, parking and transport policy, procurement, partnerships and advocacy to influence choices and pollution sources beyond the Council's direct control.
REDUCE	Reduce emissions at source, including transport, buildings, development, industry and Council activities, using regulatory powers where necessary, and transport and parking policy to support cleaner travel choices.
PROTECT	Reduce exposure where people are most vulnerable or pollution burdens are greatest, with particular attention to children, schools, healthcare facilities and communities experiencing health and environmental inequalities.
PREVENT	Avoid creating tomorrow's air quality problems through today's planning, regeneration, transport, parking, infrastructure and investment decisions.

Three commitments that make this strategy local

We will focus where we can make the greatest difference. Use evidence to prioritise places, communities and sources where intervention can produce meaningful health and air quality benefits.

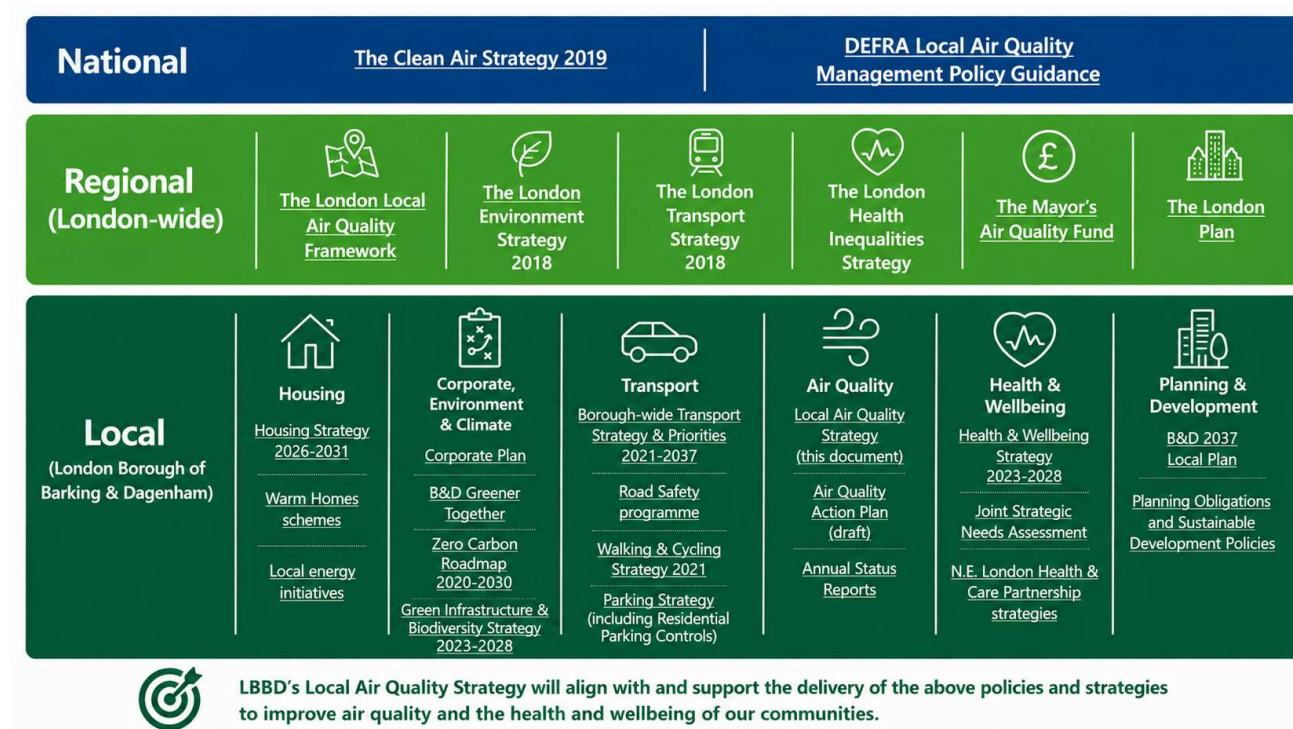
We will make air quality local and meaningful. Work particularly through schools, communities and elected members to turn evidence and awareness into understanding, participation and behaviour change.

We will make the case for change as well as making changes. Use evidence, engagement and Council leadership to build understanding of why choices about travel, vehicles, parking, development and other sources of pollution matter.

2. Clean air for every community

The purpose of this strategy is not to create another catalogue of projects. It is to establish a clear and lasting basis for how Barking and Dagenham approaches air quality: the outcome we want for residents, the principles by which we will choose priorities, and the role cleaner air should play in decisions across the Council.

This Strategy forms part of national, regional and local frameworks as shown below.



Our Vision:

Clean air for every community.

Air pollution does not affect everybody equally. Exposure, underlying health, age, occupation, housing, travel patterns and the local environment can all affect risk. Our borough-wide ambition is therefore to improve air quality for everyone whilst paying special attention to local people and places where the burden is greatest.

Our Aims:

1. Reduce air pollution and people's exposure to it.
2. Tackle unequal impacts.
3. Ensure that Barking and Dagenham's growth and development supports healthier air.

The purpose of this Local Air Quality Strategy is to:

- Set a durable long-term direction to 2035;
- Put health, exposure and tackling inequality at the centre of air quality policy;
- Make cleaner air a whole-Council consideration rather than a specialist environmental function alone;
- Establish the strategic significance of community engagement, schools, elected members, transport and parking choices;
- Guide successive AQAPs and related Council programmes without duplicating them;
- Provide a clear basis for explaining why change is needed and how choices contribute to cleaner air.

3. Why air quality matters in Barking and Dagenham

3.1 Health

Air quality is a public health issue affecting 100% of our residents, workers and visitors to the borough. National policy identifies poor air quality as the largest environmental threat to public health and emphasises that children, older people and people who are already vulnerable can be particularly affected. The health rationale for action therefore extends beyond avoiding legal exceedances: reducing exposure across the population can produce benefit even where statutory limits are met.

For Barking and Dagenham, this matters in the context of wider health and wellbeing inequalities identified through the borough's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Cleaner air should contribute to a wider approach to healthy life expectancy, prevention and healthier neighbourhoods.

3.2 Inequality and exposure

Pollution is an environmental inequality when communities that have fewer choices or greater underlying vulnerability also experience higher exposure. Our approach will therefore look not only at where pollutant concentrations are highest, but at who is exposed, for how long, and what opportunities exist to reduce that exposure.

3.3 Growth and regeneration

Barking and Dagenham is a borough of significant growth and regeneration. That creates both risk and opportunity. New homes, streets, schools, workplaces and transport arrangements can lock in patterns of exposure and vehicle use for decades, or they can make healthier, lower-emission choices easier.

Air quality should therefore be considered early in growth and infrastructure decisions. The objective is not to position clean air against regeneration, but to make healthier air part of what good regeneration delivers.

3.4 A shared problem requiring shared action

Some pollution sources sit within the Council's direct control; many do not. Major roads, freight movements, industrial activity, development, businesses, neighbouring areas and wider regional background concentrations all influence the air people breathe. The Council must therefore combine direct action with regulation, planning, partnership, advocacy, information and influence.

4. What shapes our air

The borough's air quality is shaped by a combination of local and wider sources of pollution. The Council's published information identifies road transport as the main source of atmospheric pollutants, alongside significant industrial sources in the south of the borough and close to its boundaries.

Transport and movement

Vehicle emissions are influenced by the number and type of vehicles, fuel and technology, distance travelled, congestion, driving patterns and the availability and attractiveness of alternatives. Freight, servicing and non-residential journeys are particularly important in a borough connected to strategic road networks and substantial commercial and industrial activity.

Parking and vehicle choices

Parking policy is relevant to air quality because it can influence vehicle ownership, vehicle choice, where vehicles are stored, and whether journeys are made by car. Parking availability and management also interact with development, town centres, workplaces, public transport and active travel.

The Council will therefore consider air quality outcomes in the development and implementation of parking policy, alongside accessibility, economic, transport, equality and other considerations. This includes the strategic opportunity to encourage cleaner vehicle choices, support reduced reliance on higher-emitting vehicles and help reduce avoidable non-residential vehicle journeys within the borough.

Development and construction

Development can affect air quality during construction and through the travel, heating, servicing and land-use patterns it creates. Planning and regeneration decisions are therefore among the most important preventative levers available to the Council.

Industry, commerce and other combustion sources

Industrial and commercial activity contributes to the borough's emissions profile, particularly in the south and around borough boundaries. Environmental permitting, planning, construction controls, cleaner technology and partnership with businesses and regulators all have roles to play. Domestic and commercial combustion, including solid-fuel burning, also contributes to particulate pollution and requires proportionate awareness and enforcement.

5. Our five strategic principles

5.1 UNDERSTAND

We will turn data into understanding, participation and better decisions.

Monitoring plays a critically important role, but data has greatest value when it changes understanding or enables action. We will seek to optimise monitoring, modelling, technology, evaluation and community intelligence to understand where pollution comes from, who is exposed and which interventions are effective.

We will communicate evidence in ways that are understandable, accessible and meaningful. This includes using prioritised locations such as schools to connect air quality evidence with everyday experience and to engage pupils, wider communities and elected members.

Understanding is two-way and community experience can help identify concerns, behaviours and opportunities that monitoring data alone cannot reveal.

5.2 INFLUENCE

We will use the Council's wider influence as well as its direct powers.

Cleaner air cannot be delivered by a narrow group of specialist services alone. The Council can influence air quality as planning authority, highway and parking authority, regulator, landowner, employer, purchaser, fleet operator, convenor and democratic body.

We will work with residents, schools, businesses, developers, transport bodies, the Greater London Authority, neighbouring authorities, health partners, the Environment Agency and other relevant organisations. Where important sources lie beyond direct Council control, we will use evidence and advocacy to seek proportionate action.

5.3 REDUCE

We will reduce pollution at source.

Our first preference is to avoid or reduce emissions rather than manage their consequences after they occur.

This means using the levers available to the Council across transport, parking, planning, fleet, procurement, buildings, construction, regulation and partnership. It also means recognising that apparently small choices, when repeated across a borough, can materially affect emissions and exposure.

Reduction activity should be proportionate and evidence-led. The Council will focus effort where it has a credible pathway to benefit and will seek co-benefits with health, climate, road safety, accessibility, better places and healthier school streets.

5.4 PROTECT

We will protect people where their air pollution exposure and vulnerability matters most.

Air quality action should not be distributed solely according to borough-wide averages. We will use evidence to identify places where exposure, vulnerability and opportunity for intervention come together.

Children and schools are an important part of this approach. Children may be more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution, and schools provide a practical local focus around which pupils, families, communities, elected members and Council services can understand local conditions and participate in change.

Sheltered housing schemes and residential / nursing homes are also important locations to protect due to the vulnerabilities of relatively high proportions of occupiers.

Protection also means designing streets, buildings and services in ways that reduce exposure where emissions cannot immediately be removed or reduced.

5.5 PREVENT

We will prevent new design and development tomorrow's air quality problems into the borough.

Prevention of harm is central to our strategies and services in Barking & Dagenham, a growing borough. Decisions about land use, density, parking, access, servicing, street design, heating, construction and infrastructure can shape emissions and exposure for many years.

We will work to consider air quality at the earliest practical stage of policy, programme and development decisions. Prevention is generally more effective, less disruptive and less costly than retrofitting solutions after harmful patterns have become established.

6. Three key commitments

The five principles describe how we will think about air quality. The following commitments describe how we will work. They are intended to make the strategy practical and recognisably local without turning it into a second action plan.

6.1 We will focus where we can make the greatest difference

Resources and influence are finite. We will use evidence to prioritise places, communities and sources where intervention can produce meaningful health and air quality benefits. This includes considering pollutant concentrations, exposure, vulnerability, local inequalities, the scale of the source, feasibility, co-benefits and the Council's ability to influence outcomes.

Prioritisation does not mean ignoring the rest of the borough. It means directing additional attention where the combination of need and opportunity is strongest.

6.2 We will make air quality local and meaningful

Air pollution is largely invisible. Borough-wide statistics can make it feel remote from everyday life. We will therefore use local evidence and local places to make air quality understandable and relevant.

Schools provide a particularly valuable focus. A localised approach can connect monitoring and evidence with pupils, parents and carers, nearby residents, school communities and ward councillors. Pupils can carry learning beyond the school gate into households and neighbourhoods; elected members can connect local concerns, democratic leadership and Council action.

The purpose is not simply to raise awareness. The purpose is for awareness to lead in turn to local understanding, engagement, individual agency, and sustained behaviour change.

6.3 We will make the case for change as well as making changes

Many air quality improvements ultimately involve choices: how we travel, what vehicle we own or use, whether engines idle, how goods are delivered, how buildings are heated, or how streets and parking are managed.

The Council will not assume that change will be accepted simply because an environmental benefit exists. We will explain the evidence, make the local case, demonstrate Council leadership, consider practical alternatives and engage with those affected. This is

particularly important where policy choices affect everyday convenience, cost or established patterns of behaviour.

Parking is a good example because our Parking Strategy can influence vehicle ownership and vehicle choice, as well as some decisions about whether and how journeys are made. Making the air quality connection explicit helps explain why vehicle parking is not only a question of managing kerb space, it can also contribute to cleaner vehicle choices and reduced avoidable emissions.

7. Clean air in Council decisions

This is a whole-Council strategy. Air quality should be considered proportionately wherever Council functions can materially affect emissions or exposure.

Council service area	Strategic expectation
Planning and regeneration	Prevent avoidable exposure; secure good design; consider cumulative effects; support low-emission travel, servicing and energy choices.
Transport and highways	Reduce emissions and exposure through movement, traffic management, active travel, public transport integration and street design.
Parking	Recognise parking strategy as a strategic opportunity affecting ownership, vehicle choice and some journey decisions; integrate air quality outcomes with accessibility, economic, equality and transport considerations.
Public health	Use health and inequality evidence to shape priorities; support communication, understanding, prevention and evaluation.
Environmental regulation	Use monitoring, environmental permitting, smoke-control and other regulatory powers proportionately to address relevant sources.
Fleet, procurement and contracts	Lead by example; consider emissions in vehicles, purchasing, logistics, construction and contracted services where proportionate.
Schools and communities	Use schools and priority localities as hubs for understanding, engagement, participation and behaviour change.
Economic development and business	Work with employers, freight, logistics, industry and commerce to identify practical routes to lower emissions while supporting a functioning local economy.

A simple strategic test:

Will this decision help reduce air pollution, reduce people's exposure to it, or prevent additional exposure being created?

Not every Council decision will have a material air quality effect. Where it does, this test should prompt consideration early enough for the answer to influence the decision rather than merely record its consequences.

8. From strategy to action

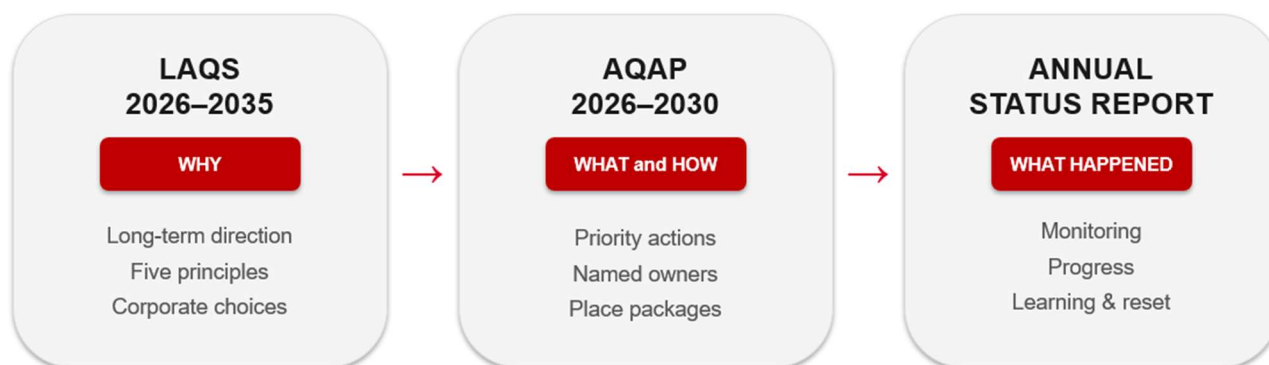
This strategy is intentionally not an action plan, its value depends on a clear relationship with the documents and programmes that deliver and evaluate it.

Document / mechanism	Question answered	Role
Local Air Quality Strategy	Why? Where are we trying to get to? What principles guide choices?	Long-term direction to 2035.
Air Quality Action Plan	What will we do now, how, by whom and by when?	Five year plan with timescales for delivering each action in the programme, including specific measures and locations.
Annual Status Report	What happened? What does the evidence show? What should change?	Annual monitoring, accountability, learning and feedback on progress delivering the AQAP.

Other Council strategies and programmes - including transport, parking, planning, regeneration, climate, public health, procurement and fleet activity - are also delivery mechanisms. This Strategy is intended to influence them positively, not to reproduce them.

Keeping delivery dynamic

- Specific interventions remain in the AQAP or relevant service programme.
- Actions can be added, amended, completed or replaced without revisiting the Strategy.
- New technology and evidence can be adopted as they mature.
- Annual reporting can redirect effort towards emerging hotspots or opportunities.
- Successive AQAPs can evolve while remaining anchored to the same long-term principles.



9. Measuring progress and keeping the strategy 'live'

The strategy should be judged by outcomes and institutional change, not by the number of actions listed within it. Detailed AQAP measures will have their own indicators. At the strategic level, LBBD will maintain a small dashboard that shows whether air quality, exposure, participation and Council practice are moving in the intended direction.

Outcome area	What we will look for
Air quality trend	Trends in monitored NO ₂ and particulate pollution, including priority locations and borough-wide context.
Exposure and inequality	Evidence that priority locations and vulnerable communities are being identified and considered in intervention design.
Prevention	Evidence that material planning, regeneration, transport and parking decisions consider air quality early and proportionately.
Community agency	Reach and quality of engagement, particularly through priority schools, communities and elected members; evidence of learning and behaviour-change outcomes (where this is measurable).
Cleaner choices	Evidence from relevant transport/parking/fleet programmes that policy is supporting cleaner vehicle and journey choices.
Delivery	Progress against the current AQAP and other material delivery programmes.
Learning	Evaluation of interventions and evidence that findings are influencing subsequent priorities.

Review

Progress will be considered annually through the ASR and related corporate reporting. A light-touch strategic review should normally accompany preparation of each successor AQAP, with a fuller review of this strategy by 2030/31 or earlier if legislation, evidence or borough circumstances materially change.

10. Governance and partnership

Air quality requires shared ownership. The Council's environmental health function will continue to provide technical leadership for local air quality management, monitoring and statutory reporting, but delivery depends on wider corporate and partner action.

Corporate leadership

Relevant services should be able to demonstrate how material decisions support, or at minimum do not unnecessarily undermine, the strategy's five principles. Governance should remain proportionate, with the objective to create ownership and unblock delivery, not to create a parallel bureaucracy.

Public health

Public Health should remain actively involved in strategy, prioritisation, communication and evaluation, ensuring that air quality action reflects health inequalities and opportunities for prevention.

Elected members

Elected members have a strategic local role. They provide democratic oversight, connect borough-wide policy with ward experience, help communicate the case for change and can support engagement around priority locations such as schools.

Partners

We will work in partnership where sources or solutions cross organisational boundaries, including with the Greater London Authority, Transport for London, neighbouring authorities, health partners, schools, businesses, developers, the Environment Agency, community organisations and other relevant public bodies.

11. Strategic outcomes to 2035

By 2035, success should be visible not only in monitoring data but in how we make decisions and how communities understand cleaner air.

Cleaner air. Long-term pollutant trends continue in the right direction, with sustained attention to particulate pollution and population exposure as well as statutory objectives.

Fairer exposure. The Council can show that vulnerability, inequality and local exposure have influenced where attention and resources are focused.

Healthy growth. New development and regeneration increasingly prevent avoidable emissions and exposure rather than requiring later correction.

Cleaner movement. Transport and parking policy contribute to cleaner vehicle choices, lower-emission journeys and reduced avoidable emissions, while recognising accessibility and economic needs.

Informed communities. Residents have better access to understandable local evidence; priority schools and communities are active participants rather than passive recipients of information.

Corporate ownership. Air quality is routinely considered across the Council where decisions can materially affect emissions or exposure.

Adaptive delivery. Successive air quality action plans evolve with evidence, technology and learning without losing sight of the strategy's long-term purpose.

Clean air for every community means combining ambition with practical choices: reducing what we can, protecting where it matters most, preventing future harm, influencing the wider system and making evidence meaningful to the people it affects.

12. References and supporting documents

This strategy should be read alongside the Council's current Air Quality Action Plan, Annual Status Reports and relevant corporate strategies. The principal external and local sources informing this working draft are listed below.

- [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs \(2023\) - Air quality strategy: framework for local authority delivery](#)
- [Greater London Authority - London Local Air Quality Management Framework](#)
- [London Borough of Barking and Dagenham - Air quality information, AQAP and Annual Status Reports](#)
- [London Borough of Barking and Dagenham - Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2024–27](#)

National and London policy context

The Environment Act 1995, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, underpins the Local Air Quality Management framework. This is administered by DEFRA which oversees the statutory commitments and work carried out by local authorities: review and assessment, air quality management areas, air quality action plans, annual status reports and this local air quality strategy. The 2023 national Air Quality Strategy expects proactive local action, emphasises population exposure, PM_{2.5}, public health, local transparency and the use of local-authority functions to improve and maintain air quality. London boroughs also operate within the London Local Air Quality Management framework mentioned above and the Mayor of London's strategic air quality arrangements.