



MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

2026 TO 2030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government's Air Quality Strategy (2023) places a requirement on Local Authorities without Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) to produce an Air Quality Strategy to set out how they will improve air quality in their area. Following the revocation of Mid Sussex District Council's only AQMA at Stonepound Crossroads in December 2024, a new Air Quality Strategy has been drawn up. Air quality monitoring continues to indicate that there is good air quality in Mid Sussex, and that the air quality objectives are being met.

The Council has a commitment to be a desirable place to work, live and visit, and good air quality is an important part of achieving this. The Council's Sustainable Economic Strategy (SES) provides a framework for addressing how economic development and social and environmental sustainability can successfully co-exist and be sustained in Mid Sussex for future generations. The SES Action Plan provides a focus on sustainable growth enabling the economy to grow whilst reducing carbon emissions. We recognise that no single organisation, agency, or department holds all the solutions; air quality improvements depend on a coordinated and collaborative effort. This Strategy is a key contributor to the delivery of the Action Plan in the SES and achievement of the Council's Net Zero targets. It provides an overview of air quality across the MSDC area and focuses on the main aspects of work undertaken by the Council to support good air quality in the District, through a range of interventions.

In summary, the Council will consult and work with all partners on matters relating to air quality. We will explore all possible mechanisms—both regulatory and non-regulatory—to minimise pollution and enhance air quality. The impacts of new developments within the district on air quality will be addressed through the planning regime, and decisions involved in

key infrastructure initiatives such as large housing projects. The Council will continue to regulate polluting industries and businesses through pro-active inspections via the environmental permitting regime, as well as reactively through the investigation of complaints.

The Council will continue to monitor air pollution, produce an Annual Status Report (ASR) on air quality and will continue to work collaboratively with all partners to raise awareness and encourage behaviour change with our residents.

BACKGROUND TO AIR POLLUTION

What is air pollution?

Air pollution is the contamination of the air around us. Air pollution is caused when natural and manmade particles and gases are released into the atmosphere which can impact our health and the natural environment. Air pollution is primarily caused by the combustion of fossil fuels, for example in power generation, industrial processes, shipping, domestic heating and road vehicles.

Air quality in the UK has improved significantly in recent decades with decreases in the major air pollutants.

Monitored pollution levels in Mid Sussex have remained stable over the last five years with only small fluctuations and a general downwards trend since 2018. These reductions benefit our health and the environment. However, air pollution continues to be the biggest environmental risk to human health, disproportionately affecting those who are already vulnerable.

The main pollutants of concern in Mid Sussex are nitrogen dioxide, ground level ozone (formed when sunlight reacts with other pollutants) and particulates. The main local source of pollution is traffic.

Once pollution is released into the air it is mainly the weather and local topography that dictate the extent to which it will cause an impact. During wet or windy conditions pollution concentrations usually remain low, either blown away or removed from the air by rain. During still weather pollution can build up to harmful levels.

How does pollution affect us?

Air pollution contributes to a range of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions.

There are significant healthcare and social care costs for diseases which have a strong association with air pollution: coronary heart disease; stroke; lung cancer; and childhood asthma.

- Potential short-term impacts: relatively mild symptoms such as irritation of the airways, sore throat, and headaches, to severe impacts such as asthma and heart attacks.

- Potential long-term impacts: reduced lung function in children, cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke, respiratory illness such as asthma, and early death

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is responsible nationally for ensuring that national health-based objective limits are not exceeded. DEFRA published their *Air Quality Strategy: framework for local authority delivery* in 2023 aimed at achieving long-term air quality goals, including new targets for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and to reduce levels of roadside nitrogen dioxide. The framework enables and supports local authorities to deliver for their communities and contribute to the statutory requirements of the *Environment Act 1995* (as amended by the *Environment Act 2021*) which requires local authorities to assess and report annually on air quality in their area. The reports must assess whether the statutory health-based objectives are being met. Where the objectives are not being met a Local Authority must produce an Air Quality Action Plan to improve local air quality. If the objectives are being met, then a local Air Quality Strategy must be produced.

DISTRICT MONITORING

The air quality objectives apply at locations outside buildings where members of the public are regularly present and might reasonably be expected to be exposed to pollutant concentrations over the relevant averaging period. Usually, this means residential properties, schools, care homes etc for long-term pollutant objectives and high streets for short-term objectives.

Air quality monitoring in Mid Sussex takes place using both real-time air quality monitoring and diffusion tubes. Our real time monitoring station is in London Road, East Grinstead and we have a network of strategically placed diffusion tubes located throughout the district. The placement of these tubes is reviewed annually to ensure that the network is up to date and targeted in relevant locations.

IMPROVEMENT MECHANISMS AVAILABLE TO THE COUNCIL

Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR 2016) – Certain industrial processes and businesses are required to apply to the Council for a permit under this legislation. They are inspected periodically by the Environmental Protection team to ensure that the polluting processes they undertake have in place appropriate steps to mitigate or control their pollution emissions.

Development Management – The Council consider the air quality impacts of proposed developments such as dust, smoke and vehicle emissions when determining applications and when developing the district plan. Conditions are imposed where necessary to mitigate adverse effects. The Council has provided guidance to developers to assess and mitigate the air quality impacts of development proposals. The Sussex-wide air quality partnership produced the guidance (*Air quality and emissions mitigation guidance for Sussex (2021)*), and it is used widely across Sussex.

Service Requests and Complaints – The Council responds to and investigates a wide range of air quality concerns from residents, such as odour from a factory or food business, smoke from bonfires, or dust from building sites. Where sufficient evidence is gathered, enforcement action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 may be taken by authorised officers.

Cultural and behavioural shift – Encouragement of change in Mid Sussex residents and promotion of the benefits of sustainability practices in line with the Council’s Sustainable Economic Strategy ([Appendix 1 - Sustainable Economy Strategy.pdf](#)). This includes support for changes to more sustainable modes of travel, heating and burning choices, and to raising awareness of the causes and impacts of poor air quality. The Council has adopted a flexible approach to working from home and encourages the use of “green” travel with incentives for staff to take sustainable methods of travel into work, provides on-site EV charge points, promotes a cycle-to-work scheme and provides access to electric bikes.

Air Quality Monitoring and Reporting – The Council continues to collect and analyse air quality monitoring data which enables identification of pollution hotspots and early interventions. The Council fulfils DEFRA’s reporting requirements and submits the Annual Status Report (ASR) in line with DEFRA’s requirements. This is posted each year on the Council’s website.

Supporting the Uptake of Electric Vehicles – The Council is a founding partner of the West Sussex ChargePoint Network through Connected Kerb, our service provider. The EV infrastructure programme is ongoing, fourteen Council -owned car park sites are now connected with more in the pipeline. On-street charging is also now well underway. As at August 2025 there are currently 134 EV sockets installed on-street and within Council-owned car parks, with 58 more planned over the next year supported by a new government scheme, the LEVI fund, exclusively for on-street installations. Developers are required to provide EV charge points in accordance with the Sussex Air quality and emissions mitigation guidance.

Collaboration – The Sussex Air Quality Partnership (SAQP) was set up to lead the work on air quality in Sussex and is formed of air quality specialists across all local authorities in East and West Sussex, as well as representatives from public health at East and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove Councils. The group disseminates information and advice to the public and provides a means to co-ordinate work to develop area wide strategies to reduce emissions and improve air quality. SAQP has also produced planning guidance, [Air quality and emissions mitigation guidance for Sussex \(2021\)](#). Grant funding from DEFRA has been secured for air quality education in schools and businesses, a public awareness campaign on clean burning for wood stoves, a project to identify barriers to uptake of electric taxis and to facilitate uptake and a bus retrofit project to reduce emissions. The Sussex Air Quality Partnership is hosted by Mid Sussex District Council.

The Council is also working with other Councils across West Sussex to develop a Climate Change adaptation and mitigation strategy. This approach recognises the need to work across local authority boundaries to address contributing factors. One of the key benefits of working at the County level is the inclusion of West Sussex County Council as the Local Highway Authority, and the potential to influence changes in the transportation sector which is the largest contributing source of emissions across the district at 39% of total emissions in Mid Sussex District in 2022 (Sectoral Emissions 2022, DESNZ, 2024).

OBJECTIVES

The table below sets out the objectives of this Strategy over the next five years to support delivery of the SES Action Plan in particular Objective 7 of the SES – To support delivery and use of sustainable infrastructure including digital, to deliver growth, support residents and visitors and provide a well connected district. The Council can deliver some of the actions without the involvement from other agencies. For the other actions, the Council uses its influence to bring about change.

Objective 1: Disseminate accurate information about air quality and promote air quality improvement to staff, residents and businesses		
No.	Action	Directly deliver/influence
1	Encourage Council staff to use more sustainable and active travel modes	Directly deliver
2	Promote air quality information to the public via the Council and Sussex Air websites and other media	Directly deliver
Objective 2: Community leadership on air quality		
3	Continue hosting the Sussex-wide air quality partnership	Directly deliver
4	Maximise opportunities to bid for Government grant funding for air quality improvement when funding rounds are announced	Influence
5	Promote education and awareness work in schools and businesses	Influence
6	Leading by example and reducing direct emissions from Council-owned buildings and vehicles in accordance with the Council's Sustainable Economic Strategy	Directly deliver
Objective 3: Encourage behaviour change and promote sustainable choices		
7	Expand the EV network through development management and the Council's involvement in the West Sussex ChargePoint Network partnering with Connected Kerb	Influence
8	Provide information on clean burning for wood stoves	Influence
9	Support and promote retrofit/decarbonisation of housing across all tenures including promotion of available funding and local installers	Influence
Objective 4: Identify and address poor air quality		
10	Investigate and resolve complaints relating to poor air quality such as smoke, odour and dust	Directly deliver
11	Continue to issue environmental permits to industrial processes in accordance with the Environmental Permitting Regulations and monitor compliance with permits	Directly deliver
12	Survey District to identify unregulated industrial processes	Directly deliver
Objective 5: Promote air quality in development management		
13	Ensure scrutiny of development proposals to consider air quality impacts requiring air quality assessments and mitigation strategies where necessary	Directly deliver
14	Embed the Air quality and emissions mitigation for Sussex guidance into planning policy	Directly deliver
Objective 6: Monitor and report on air quality within the district		

15	Produce an Annual Status Report each year and submit to DEFRA for approval	Directly deliver
16	Publish Annual Status Report on Council's website each year	Directly deliver
17	Review air quality monitoring locations annually	Directly deliver

REFERENCES

[Annual Status Report for Mid Sussex 2025](#)

[Sustainable Economic Strategy and Action Plan for 2025-2028](#)

[Air quality and emissions mitigation guidance for Sussex \(2021\)](#)

[Air Quality Strategy: framework for local authority delivery \(2023\)](#)

[West Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

[West Sussex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030](#)

[Creating Healthy and Sustainable Places – a Framework for West Sussex](#)