

Bury Local Plan

Topic Paper 12: Air quality, pollution and hazards

March 2025



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1. Introduction

1.1. This Topic Paper is one of a series that has been prepared as part of the process of evidence gathering to support Bury's emerging Local Plan. It sits alongside a range of other Topic Papers covering the following:

- Climate change and carbon reduction
- Housing
- Economy
- Centres
- Tourism and culture
- Communities
- Transport
- Built environment and design
- Green infrastructure
- Green Belt
- Water and flood risk

1.2. The principal aim of the Topic Paper is to set out current key policies, plans and strategies relating to this topic area that forms the framework for the development of the Local Plan and to present a profile of the Borough that will highlight key issues, problems and challenges that the Local Plan should seek to address and which have helped to shape and influence the direction and focus of the Local Plan's policies and designations.

2. Background

2.1. Pollution involves the introduction of harmful contaminants into the environment, which can include air, noise, light and vibration, as well as substances such as chemicals, particulate matter and certain gases. If it is not properly controlled, it can have a major impact on health, amenity, natural resources, wildlife, heritage assets and quality of life.

2.2. Development can lead to the emission of pollutants to the atmosphere, land or watercourses, both during construction and through the operation of the completed scheme. As such, it is important that the planning system is used to complement other regulatory mechanisms for controlling pollution.

3. Context

- 3.1. One of the key early stages in the process is to review other policies, plans and strategies which are of relevance to this particular topic area and which help to inform and influence the direction of the Local Plan. There is a need for the Local Plan to be consistent with planning policy at different levels.
- 3.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out Government policy in respect of planning matters and this is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This sets out the broad planning framework within which development plans are produced.
- 3.3. Sub-regionally, the Places for Everyone Plan joint plan (PfE) establishes strategic policies and site allocations across nine of the ten Greater Manchester districts. Following its adoption in March 2024, PfE is now a key part of Bury's development plan that sits alongside the Local Plan.
- 3.4. There are also a range of other plans and strategies that, whilst not being policy, are of relevance to the Borough from an air quality, pollution and hazards perspective.

National planning policy and guidance

- 3.5. All development plans must be prepared within the context of the Government's planning policies. These are primarily set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.
- 3.6. The NPPF is supported by separate policy documents related to waste² and traveller sites³ as well as more detailed information in Planning Practice Guidance⁴.
- 3.7. Central to the NPPF is the Government's objective of achieving sustainable development and it highlights that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:
 - **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth,

¹ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

² [National Planning Policy for Waste](#)

³ [Planning policy for traveller sites](#)

⁴ [Planning Practice Guidance](#)

innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

- **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

3.8. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that:

- a) a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination. This includes risks arising from natural hazards or former activities such as mining, and any proposals for mitigation including land remediation (as well as potential impacts on the natural environment arising from that remediation);
- b) after remediation, as a minimum, land should not be capable of being determined as contaminated land under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and
- c) adequate site investigation information, prepared by a competent person, is available to inform these assessments.

3.9. Paragraph 197 states that where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner.

3.10. Paragraph 198 states that planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;

- b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and
 - c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.
- 3.11. Paragraph 199 states that planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones is consistent with the local air quality action plan.
- 3.12. Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 32-002-20191101) provides advice on the role of plan-making with regard to air quality and states that all development plans can influence air quality in a number of ways, for example through what development is proposed and where, and the provision made for sustainable transport. Consideration of air quality issues at the plan-making stage can ensure a strategic approach to air quality and help secure net improvements in overall air quality where possible.
- 3.13. It is important to take into account air quality management areas, clean air zones and other areas including sensitive habitats or designated sites of importance for biodiversity where there could be specific requirements or limitations on new development because of air quality. Air quality is also an important consideration in habitats assessment, strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal which can be used to shape an appropriate strategy, including through establishing the 'baseline', appropriate objectives for the assessment of impacts and proposed monitoring.
- 3.14. Drawing on the review of air quality carried out for the local air quality management regime, plans may need to consider:
- what are the observed trends shown by recent air quality monitoring data and what would happen to these trends in light of proposed development and / or allocations;

- the impact of point sources of air pollution (pollution that originates from one place);
- the potential cumulative impact of a number of smaller developments on air quality as well as the effect of more substantial developments, including their implications for vehicle emissions;
- ways in which new development could be made appropriate in locations where air quality is or is likely to be a concern, and not give rise to unacceptable risks from pollution. This could, for example, entail identifying measures for offsetting the impact on air quality arising from new development including supporting measures in an air quality action plan or low emissions strategy where applicable; and
- opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts, such as through traffic and travel management and green infrastructure provision and enhancement.

3.15. Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 33-006-20190722) provides advice on land affected by contamination, including advice on the role of plans in considering contamination. This states that the extent to which plans will need to consider contamination will vary, but it can be helpful to:

- consider a strategic, phased approach to dealing with potential contamination if this is an issue over a wide area, and in doing so, recognise that dealing with land contamination can help contribute to achieving the objectives of EU directives such as the Water Environment Regulations 2017;
- use sustainability appraisal to shape an appropriate strategy, including through work on the 'baseline', appropriate objectives for the assessment of impact and proposed monitoring;
- allocate land which is known to be affected by contamination only for appropriate development – and be clear on the approach to remediation;
- have regard to the possible impact of land contamination on neighbouring areas (eg by polluting surface water or groundwater, or the migration of ground gas); and
- be clear on the role of developers and requirements for information and assessments.

3.16. Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 45-003-20190722) provides advice on the role of plans in planning for land instability in their areas. This states that consideration of land stability in the development plan will vary between areas and the types of issues that the plan covers, but planning authorities may need to consider:

- identifying specific areas where particular consideration of landslides, mining hazards or subsidence will be needed;
 - including policies that ensure unstable land is appropriately remediated, prohibit development in specific areas, or only allow specific types of development in those areas;
 - circumstances where additional procedures or information, such as a land stability or slope stability risk assessment report, would be required to ensure that adequate and environmentally acceptable mitigation measures are in place; and
 - removing permitted development rights in specific circumstances.
- 3.17. Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 39-002-20161209) also provides advice on dealing with hazardous substances in plan making and states that when preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities are required to have regard to the prevention of major accidents and limiting their consequences. They must also consider the long-term need for appropriate distances between hazardous establishments and population or environmentally sensitive areas. They must also consider whether additional measures for existing establishments are required so that risks to people in the area are not increased. Detailed requirements are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Places for Everyone

- 3.18. Places for Everyone (PfE) was prepared as a Joint Development Plan Document of nine of the ten Greater Manchester local planning authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). The plan was formally adopted in March 2024.
- 3.19. PfE is the strategic spatial plan that sets out a collective planning policy framework for the nine constituent boroughs. All policies within the plan are 'strategic policies' and it forms a key part of Bury's wider development plan and is used to determine individual planning applications. As such, Bury's Local Plan will need to be consistent with PfE.
- 3.20. As a strategic plan, Places for Everyone does not cover everything that Bury's Local Plan would. Therefore, Bury's Local Plan will set out more detailed policies reflecting local circumstances.
- 3.21. Places for Everyone Policy JP-S1 relates to sustainable development and states that, in preparing plans, authorities should make as much use as possible of suitable previously-developed (brownfield) land and vacant buildings to meet development needs. In bringing forward previously

developed sites for development, particular attention will be paid to tackling land contamination and stability issues, ensuring that appropriate mitigation and remediation is implemented to enable sites to be brought back into use effectively.

- 3.22. Policy JP-S4 relates to flood risk and the water environment and states that an integrated catchment-based approach will be taken to protect the quantity and quality of water bodies, including by securing the remediation of contaminated land and the careful design of developments to minimise the potential for urban diffuse pollution to affect the water environment.
- 3.23. Policy JP-S5 relates to clean air and states that a comprehensive range of measures will be taken to support improvements in air quality, focusing particularly on locations where people live, where children learn and play, where there are impacts on the green infrastructure network and where air quality targets are not being met, including:
1. Locating and designing development, and focusing transport investment, so as to reduce reliance on forms of transport that generate air pollution;
 2. Determining planning applications having regard to the most recent development and planning control guidance published jointly by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) and Environmental Protection UK (EPUK), and the most recent IAQM Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction, or relevant successor guidance, including the requirement for developers to submit construction management plans as appropriate;
 3. Requiring applications for developments that could have an adverse impact on air quality to submit relevant air pollution data so that adverse impacts on air quality can be fully assessed and development only permitted where they are acceptable and/or suitable mitigation can be provided;
 4. Restricting developments that would generate significant point source pollution such as some types of industrial activity and energy generation;
 5. Significantly expanding the existing commercial network of electric vehicle charging points, both for public and private use, including as part of new developments;
 6. Implementing the Clean Air Plan and associated measures;
 7. Facilitating the more sustainable distribution of goods within the urban area, including through accommodating urban consolidation centres and urban distribution centres that use ultra-low-emission vehicles, and local delivery facilities to reduce repeat delivery attempts;

8. Designing streets to avoid trapping air pollution at ground level, including through the appropriate location and scale of buildings and trees;
 9. Controlling traffic and parking within and around schools, early years sites and other locations that are particularly sensitive to air quality;
 10. Promoting actions that help remove pollutants from the air, such as enhancing the green infrastructure network and using innovative building materials that capture air pollutants; and
 11. Development should be located in areas that maximise the use of sustainable travel modes and be designed to minimise exposure to high levels of air pollution, particularly for vulnerable users.
- 3.24. Policy JP-G3 relates to river valleys and waterways and states that river valleys and waterways will be protected and improved as central components of our Green Infrastructure Network and a vital part of a Nature Recovery Network, making a major contribution to local identity, quality of life and the natural environment and, in doing so, identifies a number of associated priorities, including one to improve water quality, including through land decontamination and the management of diffuse pollution from industry and agriculture.
- 3.25. Policy JP-P1 relates to sustainable places and states that we aim to become one of the most liveable city regions in the world, consisting of a series of beautiful, healthy and varied places. It sets out a series of key attributes that all development, wherever appropriate, should be consistent with, including indoor and outdoor environments offering a high level of amenity that minimises exposure to pollution.

Greater Manchester Strategy 2021-2031

- 3.26. The Strategy⁵ is Greater Manchester's plan for all communities, neighbourhoods, towns and cities which make up the city-region. It is a plan for recovery and renewal following the pandemic.
- 3.27. The Strategy aims to achieve the shared vision of 'Good Lives for All: that Greater Manchester is a great place to grow up, get on and grow old; a great place to invest, do business, visit and study' and how this will be achieved.
- 3.28. The Strategy builds on the work undertaken by the Greater Manchester Strategy - Our People, Our Place (2017), by ensuring that all the people in Greater Manchester have access to safe, decent and affordable transport,

⁵ <https://aboutgreatermanchester.com/the-greater-manchester-strategy-2021-2031/>

accelerate plans towards carbon neutrality, creation of greener homes and communities and better jobs and skills.

- 3.29. The Strategy focuses on three key themes of:
- A greener Greater Manchester – focusing on tackling climate change and working toward our carbon neutral aim;
 - A fairer Greater Manchester – addressing inequality and levelling-up, from access to good jobs, to transport, health and housing.
 - A more prosperous Greater Manchester – delivering economic growth which is more equitable and socially responsible, bringing opportunities and prosperity to all.

Bury's 'Let's Do It!' Strategy

- 3.30. Bury's Let's Do It Strategy is a ten-year vision and strategy for the Borough. It seeks to build upon a shared sense of local pride and act as a call to arms for progressing the local vision of achieving *'faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation'*.
- 3.31. It is a single strategy for the council, police, health, other public services, the voluntary, community and faith sector and business communities and some of its key aims are to:
- Develop every township in the borough to be better and stronger than before the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - Tackle the causes of inequality and ensure that our children have a better start in life, with access to improved education and broader horizons;
 - Help every adult to have the opportunity to be their very best through access to high quality, local work and to help our older residents stay connected and independent;
 - Support local businesses as they seek to recover and thrive; and
 - Deliver net zero emissions and a cleaner environment for all.
- 3.32. Bury's Local Plan will play a key role in delivering the vision and aims of the Let's Do It Strategy and, as such, it is important that there is alignment between these two key local strategies.

Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan

3.33. Greater Manchester is under direction from government to meet legal limits for nitrogen dioxide on local roads in the shortest possible time and by 2026 at the latest.

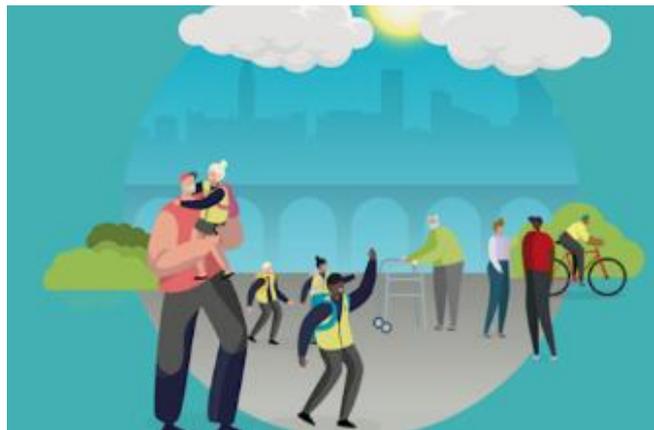
3.34. Government has approved the investment-led Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan as the best route to cutting this pollution, with:

- 117 new lower and zero-emission buses and EV infrastructure.
- Funding to support moving Greater Manchester's taxi fleet to cleaner vehicles.
- Local measures to manage traffic flows in Manchester and Salford.

3.35. The approved Clean Air Plan will allow the city-region to meet legal limits for nitrogen dioxide on local roads in the shortest possible time without the need for a Clean Air Zone.

3.36. Greater Manchester has already started cleaning up its air through targeted investment in cleaner vehicles. More than £19m government funding has been committed to vehicle upgrades, largely for buses and HGVs, with a small number of LGV, taxi and private hire upgrades. The approved Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan also includes:

- £51.1m investment in 40 new zero-emission electric buses, 77 Euro VI buses (clean air compliant), and EV charging infrastructure at bus depots: Local control of bus services through the Bee Network allows us to run zero-emission electric and clean air compliant buses in areas where nitrogen dioxide exceeds legal limits.
- £8m taxi funding: To support moving Greater Manchester's taxi fleet to cleaner vehicles.
- £5m investment in local traffic measures: To manage traffic flow on roads in Manchester and Salford and bring nitrogen dioxide within legal limits on Regent Road and Quay Street.



Bury Local Transport Strategy

- 3.37. The Bury Local Transport Strategy is a strategic plan for the development of transport within the Borough, outlining how transport will contribute to and support the longer-term aspirations of the Borough.
- 3.38. The Local Transport Strategy sets out an ambitious vision that 'By 2040, the Borough's Townships will be connected to each other, to Greater Manchester and beyond by an affordable, safe, reliable and well-maintained low carbon transport system. It will be easy to get around by public transport, on foot and by bike. Walking and cycling will be the first choice for short journeys for those who are able to walk and cycle. Investment in transport will help to grow the economy, reduce deprivation and improve the health and well-being of residents'.
- 3.39. This vision aligns with the Borough's Let's Do It Strategy, with Greater Manchester's ambitious plan to deliver the Bee Network, an integrated network composed of bus, tram, cycling and walking routes, by 2030, and with the ambitions set out in the Greater Manchester 2040 Transport Strategy (GM2040) for half of all trips to be made by public transport, walking, wheeling, or cycling by 2040.

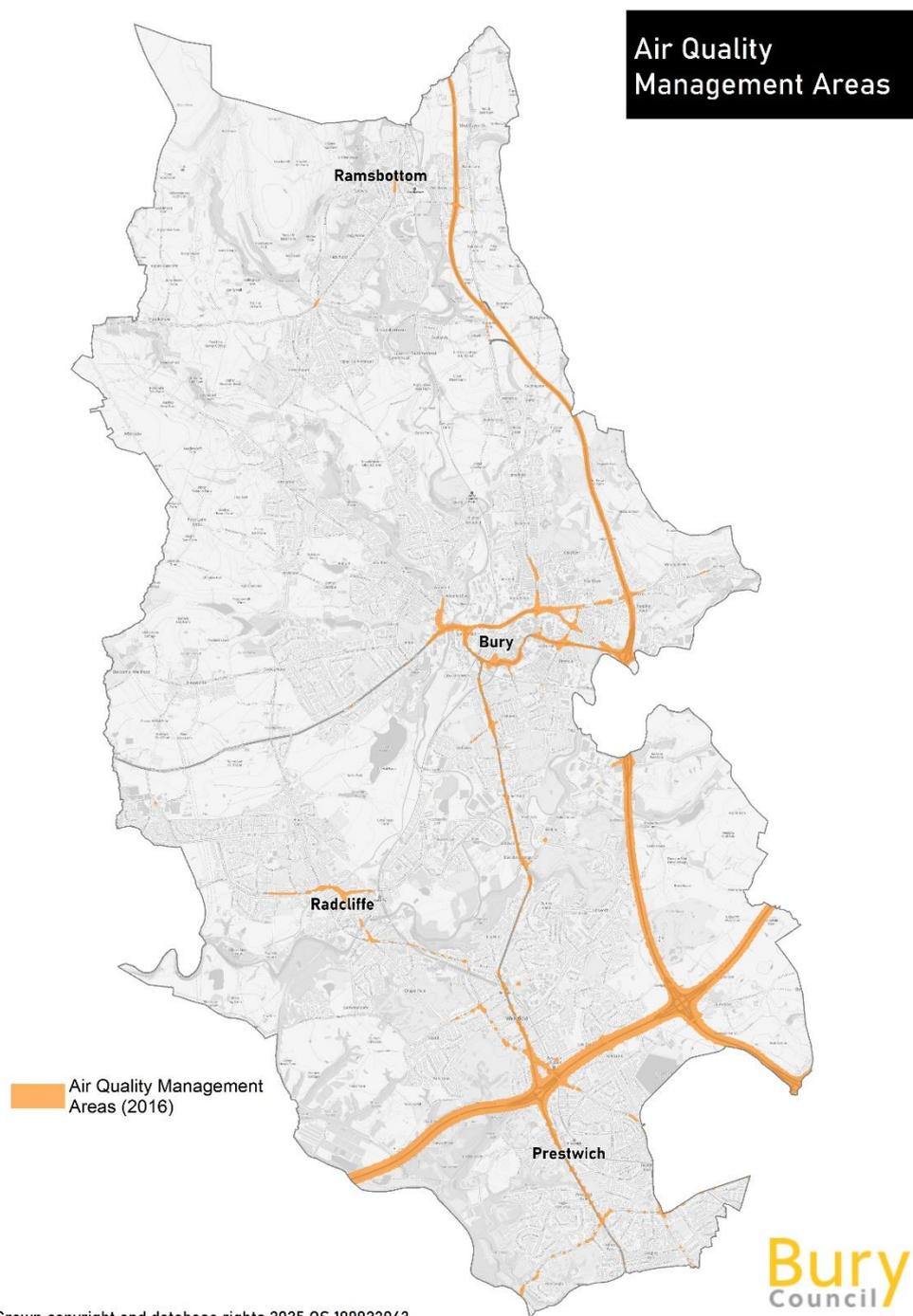
4. Local Profile

Air quality

- 4.1. Poor air quality damages everyone's health, but it can be particularly significant on the most vulnerable in our communities. Long-term exposure to elevated levels of particulates and nitrogen dioxide can contribute to the development of cardiovascular or respiratory diseases and may reduce life expectancy.
- 4.2. It is estimated that approximately 5% of deaths in GM are attributable to particulate pollution, the equivalent figure for Bury being 4.5%. Currently, Greater Manchester and Bury are compliant with the legal limits of particulate matter, but because of its impact on health it is important to ensure that it is reduced as much as possible.
- 4.3. There are a number of types and sources of air pollution, namely:
- **Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)** - Nitrogen dioxide is a gas which is a major pollutant in towns and cities and is the main type of air pollution being tackled by the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan proposals. It's caused by burning fossil fuels in diesel and petrol engines, power stations, industry, cooking and heating.

- **Particulate matter (PM)** - Particulate matter (PM) is a mixture of solids and liquids suspended in the air. It varies in size, with some particles such as dust, smoke and soot large enough to be seen by the eye. The most dangerous to health are PM10 and PM2.5 fine particles – both smaller than the width of a human hair. Normally PM10 and PM2.5 are too small to see but on days with very high pollution levels they can mix with other air pollution and appear as smog or haze. The main sources of particulate pollution are domestic wood and coal fires and stoves, vehicle exhaust fumes, brake and tyre dust, industry and construction.
 - **Ozone** - ‘Good’ ozone in the stratosphere shields us from the sun’s ultraviolet rays. But at ground level, ozone is a harmful pollutant and one of the main ingredients of smog. It’s created when pollutants from cars and industrial combustion (like power stations, chemical plants and factories) react chemically in the presence of sunlight. This means that unhealthy levels are more likely to happen on hot, sunny days. Ozone can be carried a long way by wind so can affect rural as well as urban areas.
 - **Sulphur dioxide (SO₂)** - Sulphur dioxide is a colourless gas with a strong smell. The main source of sulphur dioxide pollution in the UK is power stations burning fossil fuels such as coal and heavy oils. Petrol refineries, vehicle engines and home coal fires and stoves also produce this pollutant.
- 4.4. The main source of nitrogen dioxide is road vehicles (especially older, diesel ones). Reducing these emissions is vital to clean up our air and to prevent people contracting and suffering from serious health conditions.
- 4.5. Figure 1 shows the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) declared across the Borough. The AQMA incorporates the majority of the major strategic roads in the Borough including the A56, A58, M62 and M66 while the table sets out the attributable deaths and years of life lost in the Borough due to air quality issues.

Figure 1 – Bury's Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)



- 4.6. The Council measure the quality of the air at 23 locations across the borough. Four of these sites (Bury Bridge, Radcliffe, Whitefield and Prestwich) use very accurate automatic monitoring equipment that measure nitrogen dioxide and fine particles (PM10) in real time.
- 4.7. There are also 19 sites where the Council monitor air quality using simple and reasonably accurate equipment called diffusion tubes to measure

nitrogen dioxide on a monthly basis. The monthly readings are used to give an annual average (mean) level of nitrogen dioxide.

Air pollution from industry

- 4.8. Some types of industry can contribute to local air pollution. In order to control the amount of pollutants, such as particulates or volatile compounds being released into the air, businesses are issued with an Environment Permit which controls the way they operate.
- 4.9. Businesses must apply for an Environmental Permit and undergo regular inspections to ensure that they are employing the Best Available Techniques to reduce any adverse effects on air quality. Permits are issued under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.
- 4.10. There are over 60 sectors which are covered by the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations but common processes are petrol stations, concrete batches, vehicle resprayers and dry cleaners. The Environment Agency regulates larger industries.
- 4.11. A public register must be maintained which includes details of the installations which are permitted by the Council under Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010. The latest register shows that there are 48 installations that have been permitted by the Council.

Contaminated land

- 4.12. Contaminated land is land that has become polluted by substances which may be harmful to humans or the environment. This usually happens as a result of, spillages or leakages of chemicals and fuels on past industrial sites or the disposal of rubbish and waste in tips and landfill sites.
- 4.13. The Council has a duty under Part 2A Environmental Protection Act 1990 to identify land that presents an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment and ensure that those who are responsible for the contamination clean it up. Bury Council's Contaminated Land Strategy sets out the way we deal with potentially contaminated land.
- 4.14. The Council is required to maintain a Public Register of Contaminated Land to comply with Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990 and the Contaminated Land (England) Regulations 2000.
- 4.15. However, there are currently no entries on Bury Council's Contaminated Land Register.
- 4.16. An entry on the register will be created if one of the following happens:

- The land is designated as a Special Site
- The remediation declaration is published
- A remediation statement is published
- A remediation notice is served

Hazardous installations

- 4.17. A hazardous installation is a facility or site that handles, stores, or processes dangerous substances that pose risks to human health, the environment, or property. These installations typically involve flammable, toxic, explosive, or radioactive materials, which, if mishandled, could result in accidents such as fires, explosions, chemical spills, or environmental contamination.
- 4.18. The production and use of hazardous substances is a crucial part of the local and national economy. However, by definition, hazardous substances have the potential to cause significant harm to the public and the built environment if these are not properly controlled.
- 4.19. There are currently four hazardous installations located in Bury, namely:
- Tygas Ltd, Webb Street, Bury;
 - Gas distribution station, Wood Street, Bury;
 - Tetrosyl Ltd, Bridge Hall Lane, Bury; and
 - Holchem Laboratories Ltd, Pilsworth Road, Pilsworth Industrial Estate, Bury.

5. Summary of Key Issues

- 5.1. This Air Quality, Pollution and Hazards Topic Paper has highlighted a number of Key Issues that need to be considered in taking the Local Plan forward. These Key Issues are considered to be as follows:

- The need to prevent both new and existing development from contributing to, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of pollution and poor air quality.
- The need to ensure that any risks associated with contamination or land stability can be appropriately mitigated and safe development can be achieved.
- The need to control hazardous uses and development close to hazardous installations.

Bury
Council