

# Sutton's Environment Strategy FAQ

## Topic: Air Quality/ Energy Recovery Facility (ERF)

The council consulted on its Environment Strategy for eight weeks in August 2018. As well as answering the questions, participants were invited to provide comments. We received nearly 700 comments, all of which were reviewed and influenced the final draft of the strategy. A lot of the comments were very similar, and we have curated these comments into a comprehensive FAQ documents giving the answers for the public to view.

An Energy Recovery Facility is a waste treatment facility that uses non-hazardous residual (post-recycling) waste as fuel to generate energy. There are over 20 facilities already operating in the UK and hundreds more across Europe. The Beddington Energy Recovery Facility supports Sutton Council's commitment to encourage the borough to reduce waste and to increase recycling. When operational it will generate around 26 megawatts of electricity, which will help towards the Mayor of London's target to achieve 25 percent of London's energy supply from decentralised energy resources by 2025.



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**1. More action needs to be taken to reduce smoke and its impact on air quality. For example, stop people having BBQs and bonfires**

Whilst there are no restrictions on bonfires and BBQ's, the Council can regulate these where the frequency and nature of the events cause a Statutory Nuisance.

**2. More action needs to be taken to stop the use of wood burning stoves which cause poor air quality.**

The existing regulations provide for a degree of control in two ways, either through the type of fuel that can be used or the type of burner. Wood burners can only be used to burn non 'smokeless' fuel if they are 'exempt appliances' which means that they have been certified by DEFRA as meeting emissions standards. If the burner is not exempt, or if burning in an open fireplace, then only authorised fuel, commonly known as 'smokeless' fuel, can be used. The Council already enforce these regulations through Smoke Control Orders, and are already considering options to raise awareness of these requirements. We are also aware that the government is considering a review of the legislation around these types of heating sources, and the borough will provide input into any consultation.

**3. It is vital air quality is improved to reduce illness and premature death**

The Council has already set out its commitment to improve air quality through the adoption of Cleaner Air Borough status criteria in order to improve health and benefit the environment. Action is already being taken to improve air quality through delivery of the measures set out in our Air Quality Action Plan, however this requires a coordinated effort including engagement by members of the community.

**4. Too many cars are parked in residential roads increasing air pollution.**

The parking provisions across the borough are being reviewed as part of the Parking Strategy in order to achieve a balance between provision of adequate space for parking while addressing issues such as air pollution and congestion.

**5. What are the plans for addressing air pollution in Worcester Park? Buses get caught up in congestion and its heavily congested as it is a major link road for the A3 and A217.**

The levels of nitrogen dioxide in Worcester Park exceed the air quality objectives so the borough will be working to improve air quality in this area. Funding is being sought to deliver a package of air quality improvements through working with businesses, residents and the school communities. It is aimed that these will complement a package of highways improvements that are being proposed for the area.

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**6. Public transport should be low-emission/zero emission.**

The Council have limited responsibility over the provision of public transport, which is managed by Transport for London. However the Council regularly campaigns for the introduction of low emission buses on routes that operate in or pass through the Borough. TfL plan that every bus will be Euro Bus 6 in the next few years meaning they will be cleaner and quieter. TfL now only award contracts for single decker buses with new vehicles being electric buses.

**7. How will you protect schools from airborne pollutants? Is it possible to instigate road closures around them?**

Sutton is exploring the feasibility of timed closures around schools and how this can be achieved in connection with other planned highways schemes (eg Quietways).

**8. What is particulate matter?**

Particulate matter is a term used to describe tiny (microscopic) solid and liquid droplets suspended in the air and includes soot, dust and pollen.

**9. Can you introduce controlled zero emissions zones in areas with poor air quality of high footfall?**

Our Air Quality Action Plan includes a measure to work with communities to look at issues such as this and agree on the actions to be taken. The introduction of access restrictions to areas in order to create a Low Emission Zone will impact the whole community so the views of all those affected need to be considered.

**10. Is it possible for Sutton to become the first zero emissions borough in London?**

The 'Zero Emission Zone' refers to an area in which no fossil-fuelled vehicle is able to enter. To set up restrictions or a charging scheme for all vehicles entering the borough that are not zero-emission would be difficult and costly to implement. However, the borough will be implementing actions to support the uptake of vehicles which have zero tailpipe emissions.

**11. Developers should have to adhere to strict regulations with the potential to get fined, to stop dust being continually blown around nearby residential homes.**

For developments that are subject to planning consent, officers in Regulatory Services (Environmental Health) are consulted. Where the proposed construction activity is considered to be such that dust may be generated that could impact the surrounding community, the developer is required to submit a management plan setting out dust control measures. Officers seek to ensure that those measures are implemented and are operating effectively so as to limit the impact of dust on the local neighbourhood.

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**12. How will you encourage people to support your proposals for air quality?**

The success of the Air Quality Action Plan is dependent on the support of the whole community. As we develop and implement the measures needed to make improvements to air quality we will be seeking ways to engage communities including providing information, raising awareness and meeting with local interest groups.

**13. The Energy Recovery Facility seems to contradict the vision for clean air and recycling. It needs to either be closed or phased out. Why is this not included in the strategy?**

The Energy Recovery Facility is a facility for both managing waste and recovering energy from the process. The air quality impacts from the energy recovery facility were assessed as part of the planning application process and a permit to operate has been granted by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency will regulate the process in order to ensure compliance with these limits. Over time, there will no longer be a need for the landfill gas engines which currently operate on the site, and the number of vehicle movements associated with the whole waste management process is predicted to reduce. The air quality assessment prepared as part of the planning application identified that the operation of the site would have a negligible impact upon air quality. Without the energy recovery facility, an alternative means of handling waste would need to be found as continuing to send waste to the existing landfill is not a sustainable solution.

**14. I am very concerned about pollution and air quality in my area, particularly the impact caused by the energy recovery facility.**

The operation of the Energy Recovery Facility is closely regulated under a permit issued by the Environment Agency which means processes will be required to operate within strict limits and the emissions will be monitored so as to demonstrate compliance. In addition, the council monitors air quality in the borough and all the data is publicly available online and in our annual reports.

**15. How will you mitigate the impact that extra lorries taking waste to the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility will have on air quality?**

The assessment that was submitted as part of the planning process compared the number of vehicle movements associated with the landfill with the future number associated with the Energy Recovery Facility. As there will no longer be a need for vehicles that transport the earth for covering landfilled waste, there will be a net reduction in the number of vehicles associated with the waste management process.

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**16. How have you considered the impact of the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility on air quality?**

The impacts of the Energy Recovery Facility on air quality were considered as part of the planning application. This considered the impacts on local air quality during both the construction of the facility and its future operations taking into account emissions from the stack and the associated vehicle movements. The operation of the Energy Recovery Facility was identified in the Air Quality Assessment to have no more than a negligible effect on air quality and there are predicted to be no overall increase in vehicle movements associated with waste management activities at this site. By generating energy that can be recovered and used locally, there can be wider benefits as the energy demand would otherwise need to be met from other sources which may themselves generate air pollution.

**17. I would make it clear and honest that the council has the vision to use incineration of waste as part of its policy thereby owning the impact of the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility.**

The strategy includes the waste hierarchy which sets out how energy recovery from waste is better for the environment than landfilling waste and this is part of our waste policies.

**18. How can you justify saying that renewable energy for a few homes from the incinerator can be classed as clean air in view of the emissions which will be put into the air from the facility?**

The air quality impacts from the Energy Recovery Facility were assessed as part of the planning application process and identified that the operation of the site would have a negligible impact upon air quality.

**19. Energy created from the Beddington Energy Recovery facility is not renewable energy.**

That's correct; the energy from the Energy Recovery Facility is low carbon, but is not renewable.

**20. How will air quality at the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility be monitored?**

The emissions from the stack will be monitored according to the requirements set down in the permit issued by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency will regulate the process which will include checks of the monitoring data. In addition, the Council operates an air quality monitoring network. New air quality monitors were installed in Beddington Lane in 2014 in order to gather data before operations at the Energy Recovery Facility commenced. An existing monitoring station will also be relocated from the business park to Beddington Village. The automatic monitoring stations are complemented by a number of indicative monitors which are used to help identify any pollution hotspots.

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**21. Why are you burning recycling at the Energy Recovery Facility?**

The Energy Recovery Facility is diverting waste that would have previously been landfilled. Recycling materials are not processed at the Energy Recovery Facility.

**22. More people will surely result in more pollution?**

Population growth has the potential to worsen the impact humans have on the environment more generally, not just on air quality. The strategy aims to mitigate the impact that population growth could have on the environment.

**23. What about the impact smoking and vaping has on air quality and health?**

Since July 2007 virtually all enclosed public places and workplaces in the whole of the United Kingdom have smoke free legislation in place, making it the biggest jurisdiction in the world (by population) to have legally-enforced protection from second-hand smoke. This legislation is intended to ensure a healthier environment, so everyone can socialise, relax, travel, shop and work free from second-hand smoke. Through the Choosing Health White Paper on public health, the government set out a clear strategy to tackle smoking and its effects on health. The Health Act, or smokefree legislation, that was passed by Parliament in 2006 has made almost all enclosed public places and workplaces smoke free.

More information about smoking and smoke free zones in Sutton is available on the Council website. Breaches to the smoking regulations can be reported here too:

[https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200497/pollution/1232/air\\_pollution/7](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200497/pollution/1232/air_pollution/7)

**24. The vision doesn't seem achievable, how do you plan to deliver it?**

The Air Quality Action Plan will form the basis of the air quality chapter. The action plan contains the measures that we will be looking to implement over the lifetime of the action plan and which will help to achieve the targets.

**25. The Beddington Energy Recovery Facility makes the vision and targets unachievable, how do you plan to mitigate this?**

Improvement in the borough's air quality will principally come from tackling emissions from road vehicles. The Energy Recovery Facility does not prevent the council from achieving its vision of cleaner air and its targets around reducing nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. The air quality impacts from the Energy Recovery Facility were assessed as part of the planning application process and identified that the operation of the site would have a negligible impact upon air quality.

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**26. Why encourage people to exercise if the air will be harmful?**

NHS guidelines recommend 150 minutes of moderate activity (or 75 minutes of vigorous activity) per week. 20 minutes per day of active travel contributes significantly to this. When people choose to drive rather than walk or cycle, this can mean they don't do their recommended amount of exercise, which could affect their health. By walking or cycling instead of driving, residents can both improve their health and help to contribute to improving air quality. Furthermore, studies have shown that people are exposed to higher levels of air pollution when in a motor vehicle compared to the exposure they would suffer making the same journey by foot or by bicycle.

**27. Why has the council not responded to the questions that have been asked about the incinerator? There is a lot of misinformation about it and educating the residents would help to alleviate some of the worries.**

We have a dedicated area on our website which answers a lot of frequently asked questions about the Energy Recovery Facility. These pages also answer many of the questions we were asked as part of the environment strategy consultation. For more information, visit <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/erf>

**28. How can you justify having an incinerator in a borough trying to cut carbon emissions?**

The air quality impacts from the Energy Recovery Facility were assessed as part of the planning application process and identified that the operation of the site would have a negligible impact upon air quality. The Energy Recovery Facility is a source of low carbon energy.

**29. Why are the residents at Hackbridge being compelled to purchase energy at inflated prices from The Libdem energy company?**

The decision was agreed by a vote at the Housing, Economy and Business Committee on 3rd March 2015 to proceed with the establishment of the Sutton Decentralised Energy Network as recorded here: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?XXR=0&Year=2015&CId=453&MD=ielistmeetings>