

Consultation Booklet

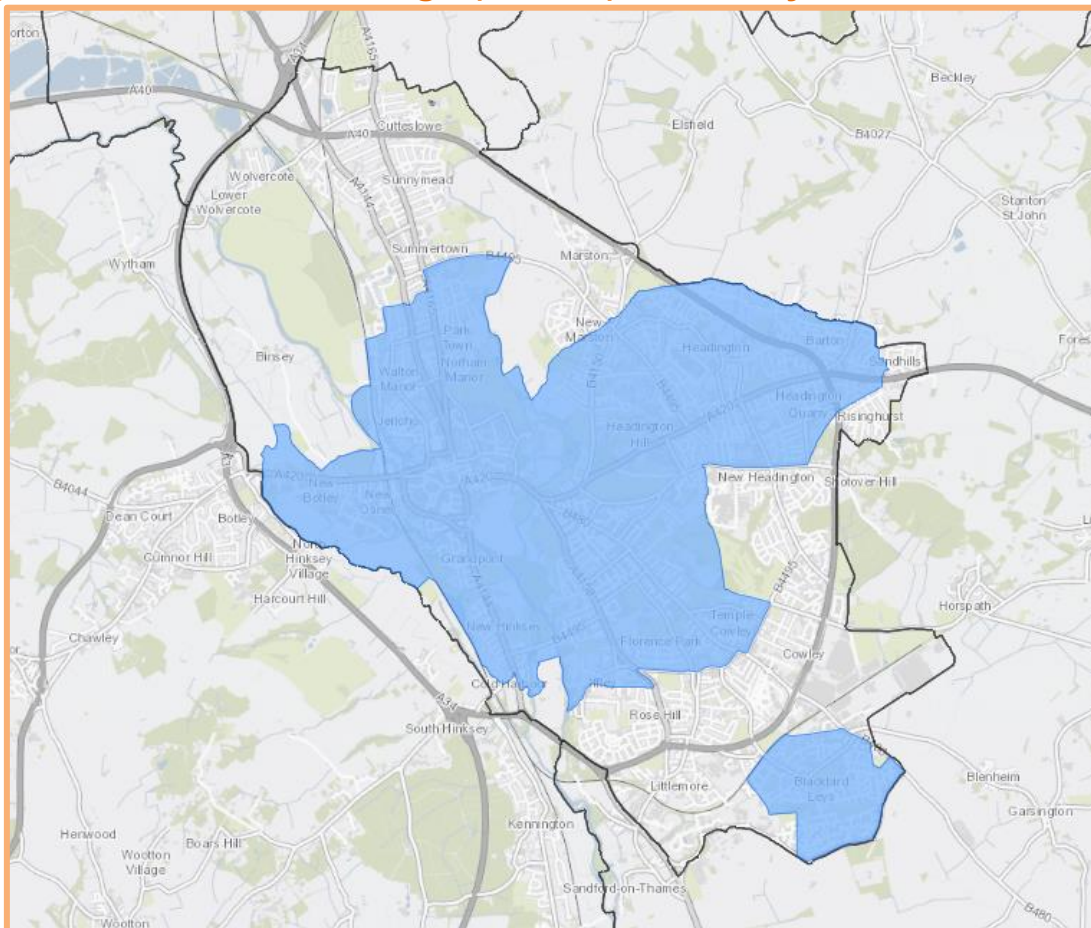


Oxford City-wide Smoke Control Area

Overview

There are currently 23 Smoke Control Areas (SCAs) in Oxford, declared during the period 1958-1986. These currently cover around 48% of the city.

Figure 1 – Current coverage (in blue) of the city's 23 SCAs



Source: DEFRA: [UK AIR's Smoke Control Area Interactive map](#)

This consultation aims at getting the views of residents, businesses, and stakeholders on Oxford City Council's current plans to expand the 23 pre-existing SCAs, to cover the whole of Oxford as a SCA.

This is a part of wider efforts to improve air quality and improve public health across the city.

What is a Smoke Control Area (SCA)?

Under the Clean Air Act 1956, Local Authorities can designate Smoke Control Areas (SCAs). SCAs are designated areas of the city where it is an offence:

- to emit smoke from a chimney of a building, from a chimney serving the furnace of any fixed boiler or industrial plant;
- for anyone to sell by retail, unauthorised fuel within the area covered by the SCA.

What are the exemptions to Smoke Control Area legislation?

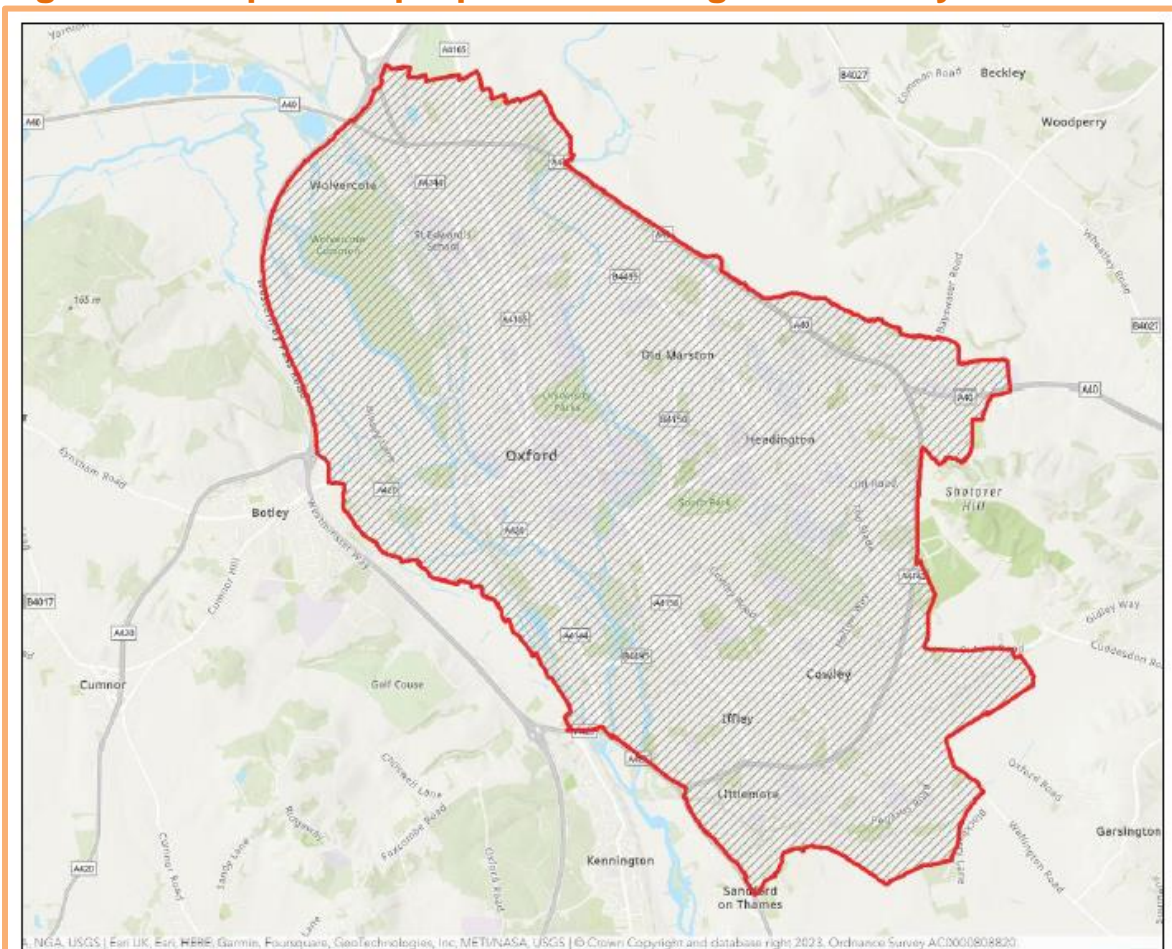
You are still allowed to emit smoke within a SCA provided you fulfil any of the following requirements:

- Your stove/appliance forms part of the current [list](#) of approved appliances provided by the Department Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA);
- The fuel you use in your burning stove/appliance is included in the current [list](#) of approved fuels for use in SCAs provided by DEFRA;
- You are emitting smoke from an outdoor barbecue, chiminea, or pizza oven;
- You are doing a garden bonfire (as long as the specific [rules](#) on bonfires are followed).

What is being proposed?

This is a proposal to revoke all Oxford's existing 23 Smoke Control Orders currently covering a large part of the city, and to replace them with a new single Order declaring the whole of the city a smoke control area.

Figure 2 – Map of the proposed coverage for the city-wide SCA



Title: Oxford City Smoke Control Area

Licensing Information:

Produced by Oxford City Council using ArcGIS & Mapping Services

Date: 19/10/2023

OS licence number: AC0000808820

www.oxford.gov.uk



This means that several areas of the city including North Oxford (from Summertown up to Wolvercote), Rose Hill, Littlemore, New Headington, Old Marston, and parts of the Temple Cowley which currently fall outside SCA legislation, would (with this proposal) start being covered by the legislation.

The extension will not change the rules for the residents who currently live in areas already covered by SCA legislation – estimated to cover 48% of the city.

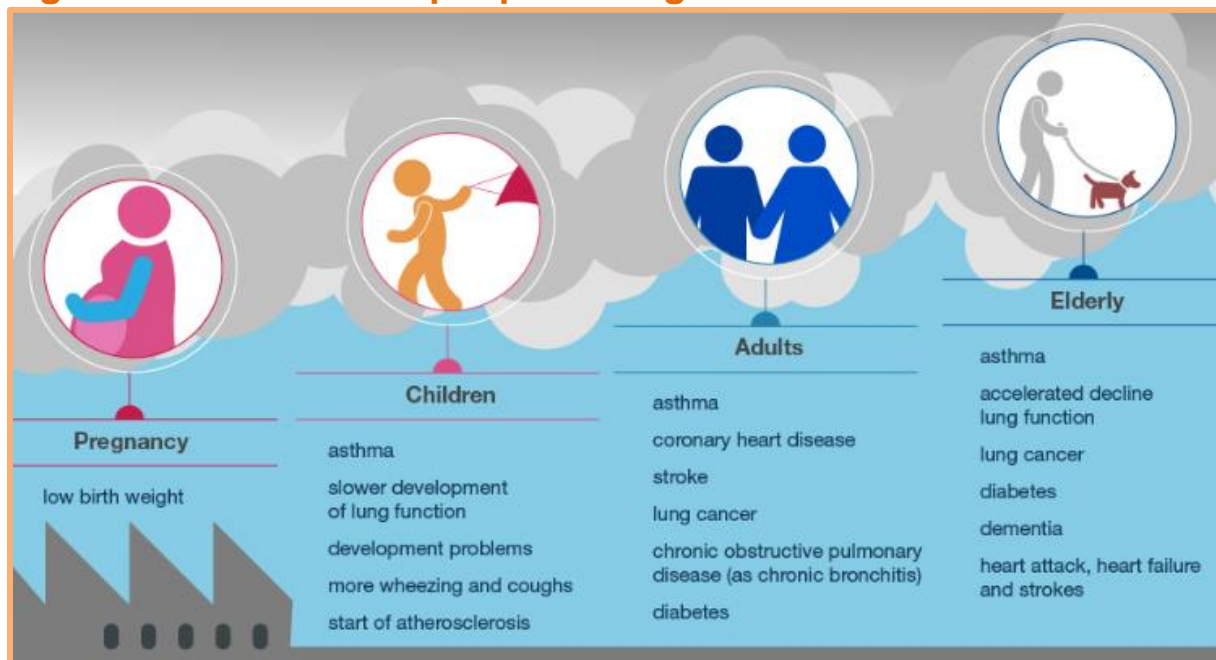
Why do we think it's important to create a city-wide SCA?

The main purpose of this proposal is to tackle the public health emergency caused by high exposure of residents to fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) that result from uncontrolled burning of solid fuels.

When wood and/or coal is burned, PM_{2.5} is released into the outdoor air and into your home environment. These invisible particles have the potential to cause damage to every organ in the human body.

Breathing in PM_{2.5} can result in coughs, dizziness, inflamed airways, and shortness of breath. It can also increase the risk of pneumonia, COPD and lung cancer, cause heart disease and stroke (leading to early death). Children and young people can be more vulnerable to the impacts of PM_{2.5} as it can aggravate and cause conditions such as asthma as well as stunting lung growth and their cognitive development.

Figure 3 – PM_{2.5} affects people throughout their lifetime.



Source: Public Health England: [Health Matters](#)

Wood smoke also contains many of the same toxic and carcinogenic substances (cancer causing) as cigarette smoke, including benzene, benzo(a)pyrene, and dibenzo[a,h]anthracene.

What is the evidence behind it?

Several [research](#) studies have revealed the harm that particulate pollution from the use of solid fuels at home can be to human health. In addition they have been found to increase pollution levels inside homes (as these pollutants are released into the air when materials are burned) and contribute to an overall increase of air pollution levels in urban areas.

According to DEFRA's [latest](#) data:

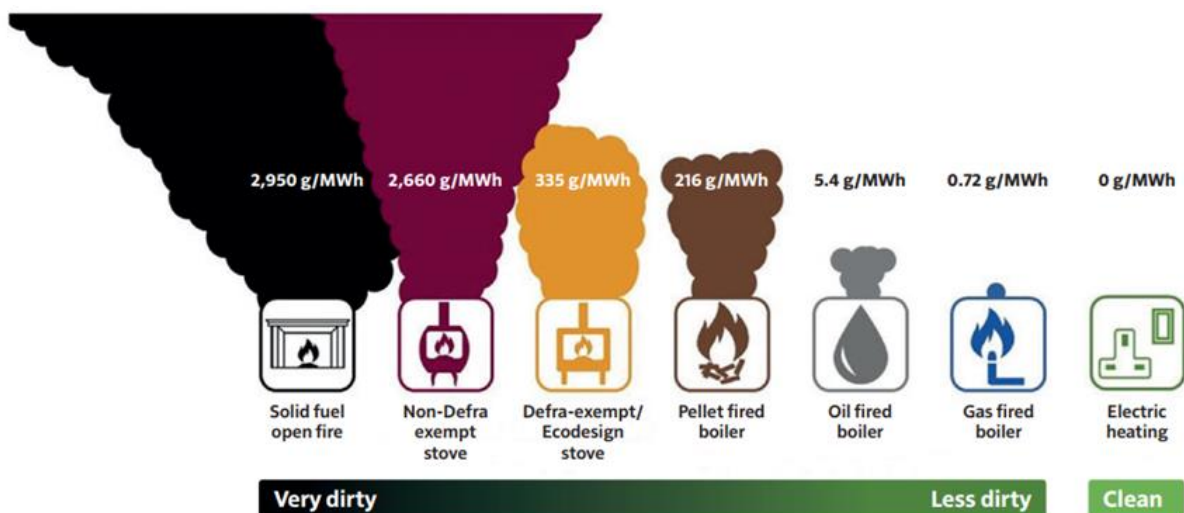
- Domestic combustion is the major source of particulate pollution (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) in the UK,

accounting for 16 per cent of total PM₁₀ emissions and 27 per cent of total PM_{2.5} emissions in 2021, with most emissions from this source coming from households burning wood in closed stoves and open fires.

- Over the last decade alone (from 2011 to 2021), emissions from fine particulate pollution (PM_{2.5}) from domestic wood burning increased by 124 per cent in the UK.

Figure 4 (below) was obtained from the Chief Medical Officer's Annual [Report and](#) shows the comparative amounts of PM_{2.5} emissions from various domestic heating methods per unit of energy derived, including open fires and non-Defra approved stoves which would now be covered by SCA legislation under this proposal.

Figure 4 – Relative PM_{2.5} emissions from domestic heating methods.



According to Oxford city's latest air pollution source apportionment [study](#), the domestic combustion sector alone (i.e. all the combustion of fossil fuels and biomass in residential appliances, usually for heat generation), is

responsible for 66% of all the city's PM_{2.5} emissions respectively.

The [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) has found that 5.5% of deaths from all causes in those aged 30+ are attributable to PM_{2.5} alone in Oxford. Oxford also performs [worse](#) than all the other districts in Oxfordshire for the number of deaths relating to particulate air pollution.

What are the wider benefits of this proposal?

With this proposal Oxford City Council expects to:

- Ensure consistency in relation to the legal restrictions of burning solid fuel and the type of equipment that can be used;
- Help support and streamline the enforcement of the clean air and domestic fuel regulations by encouraging an effective and holistic approach to tackling smoke pollution;
- Improve general communication and awareness raising about wood burning emissions with residents, and in particular to reinforce the messages underpinning the Council's [Do You Fuel Good?](#) Campaign;
- Be a catalyst for positive behavioural change.
- Lead to a reduction in particulate pollution across the city (including in areas which already are covered by SCA legislation), as PM_{2.5} emissions

can travel long distances and hence affect larger areas;

- Reduce the amount of cardio-respiratory hospital admissions and bring general long term health improvements of all the city residents and visitors.

Legal Enforcement of SCAs

The new proposed Order will make it an offence to emit smoke from a chimney of any building, or from a furnace or any fixed boiler within the administrative area of Oxford City Council.

The Environment Act 2021 (EA21) changed some of the controls which apply in SCAs. The criminal offence of emitting smoke from a chimney is now subject to a Civil Penalty.

Fixed Penalty Notices of between £175 and £300 may be applied to these offences. Officers in the Regulatory Services and Community Safety Service Area have reviewed and implemented these changes, which apply in areas covered by the existing SCAs.

It also makes it illegal for anyone to sell by retail, unauthorised fuel within the area covered by the Order, they will be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine of up to £1000.

How does this proposal link to other policies and schemes?

In January 2021 Oxford City Council published its current [Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2025](#), outlining the list of actions that the Council and its partners are taking to improve air quality in Oxford.

Measure 22 of the Plan refers to Oxford City Council's commitment to "*Review of Smoke Controlled Zones and implementation of revised government legislation for smoke nuisance*".

In September 2021, [new World Health Organisation \(WHO\) guidelines](#) were published, which establish a much more stringent set of concentrations (called guideline values) for fine particulate pollution PM_{2.5}, as a result of the clear evidence of the harmful health effects of particulate pollution at levels below the current legal air quality standards, previously considered to be safe.

In November 2021 a new [Environment Act](#) (EA 2021) passed into UK law, setting two air quality targets for PM_{2.5}:

- An Annual Mean Concentration Target - a maximum concentration of 10µg/m³ to be met across England by 2040.
- A Population Exposure Reduction Target- a 35% reduction in population exposure by 2040 (compared to a base year of 2018).

In October 2022, Oxford City Council launched “[Do You Fuel Good?](#)”, in partnership with Oxford Friends of the Earth and the Canal & River Trust, to educate and inform people who use wood burning stoves and open fires on the harms they cause, and ways to reduce the impact of their usage.

In June 2023, the city’s air quality annual status [report](#) was published, showing that PM_{2.5} levels are slightly above the current recommended WHO guidelines, in the areas where this pollutant is measured in the city.

View Oxford City Council’s Draft Smoke Control Order 2024

A copy of the ‘Oxford City Council’s Draft Smoke Control Order 2024’ and accompanying map is available to view as part of the documents that form part of this public consultation.

What Can You Do?

We would like to hear from you. What do you think about these proposals?

Electronic copies of the draft Smoke Control Order, booklet and questionnaire are available here:

<https://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/policy-and-communications/smoke-control-area-expansion>

Please complete the online survey by the 31st January 2024 (23h59).

If you wish to complete the survey in paper format please contact us via airquality@oxford.gov.uk to request a copy.