



A GREENER, HEALTHIER SWINDON

Director of Public Health
Annual Report

2026

A GREENER, HEALTHIER SWINDON



Dr Emma Kain, Director of Public Health, Swindon

Swindon is a fantastic place to live and work, being ranked 5th in the 2025 Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities Index. We are a vibrant and green borough, with abundant parks and green spaces, beautiful lakes and waterways, which are highly valued by our residents. We have good air quality and a growing infrastructure to support walking, cycling and running in the borough.

As a council and a health system we are thinking a lot about how we improve the health of Swindon's neighbourhoods, focusing on prevention of ill health and promotion of wellbeing. Our surroundings are one of the key building blocks we need to consider when building healthy communities and places. We know that the environment we live in is an important factor in how we live our lives, whether it is how we get to school or work, where we play sports, or spend time with friends and family. On the other side of the coin, we need to think about the impact of how we live our lives on the health of the planet. We can all play a part in improving the world around us, and it is when all those small actions come together that we can have a meaningful impact.

In my first Director of Public Health report, I wanted to highlight some of the activity already happening across Swindon with the twin benefits of improving health and our environment, as well as some of the opportunities for us to go further, particularly when thinking about the most vulnerable in our communities. We want to make sure that Swindon is thriving both now and for future generations to come.

'Where we live
can shape
our health,
including how
long we can
expect to live.'

The Health Foundation

The building blocks of health



INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly clear that the places we live, the food we eat and the environment in which we exist contribute to our health. Our physical environments are intrinsically linked to our physical and mental wellbeing, with evidence showing that many of the key drivers of ill health, including poor air quality, food systems, and lack of physical activity are also contributing to changes in the health of our planet.

Our environment impacts health both directly and indirectly. Direct impacts include the changing patterns of weather we are now seeing on a regular basis, including extreme heat causing heat exhaustion and heatstroke, floods leading to the displacement and injury and intense storms resulting in fatalities. Indirect impacts are those that alter the systems that support our health. Poor air quality and pollution can increase the risk of respiratory diseases, disrupted food production can affect the nutrients we eat, and extreme weather can impact us economically and socially. Increasing global temperatures, extreme weather events and urbanisation may also limit accessibility to green and blue spaces, active travel, and local produce options, which can worsen chronic conditions and reduce health resilience.

The health impacts associated with our changing environment are not equal, with vulnerable groups, including children, older adults and low-income families being identified as the highest risk groups, both globally and in the UK. Research presented at the 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) outlined that within the UK, the poorest communities are often the most exposed to the adverse effects of a declining climate, including pollution, flooding, and increasing temperatures.

This report offers an opportunity to better understand the relationship between our environment and health and outlines some meaningful steps we can take to improve health outcomes. In particular, the topics explored throughout this report include:

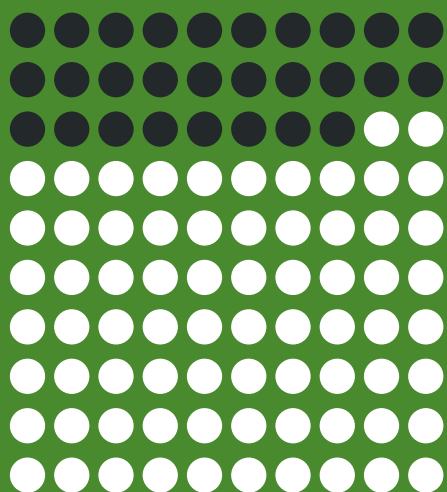
- **Food and healthy eating**
- **Active travel and physical activity**
- **Green and blue spaces**
- **Extreme weather and air quality**
- **Housing**

FOOD, ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH



Transforming the way we purchase, consume, and dispose of food can benefit our health and the climate. Shifting towards lower-emission diets, which prioritise fresh local produce can reduce our emissions, promote biodiversity and improve our overall health by lowering the risks of chronic disease.

The 2024 UK Food Security report reported that the poorest 10% of the population consume around 40% less fruit and vegetables than the recommended amount. Increasing cost pressures are expected to worsen this. On average, Swindon adults consume only 2.5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day, and only 28% of residents consume the recommended five portions a day—lower than England and Southwest averages.



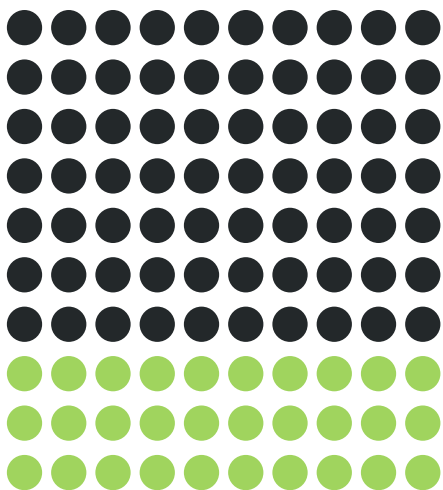
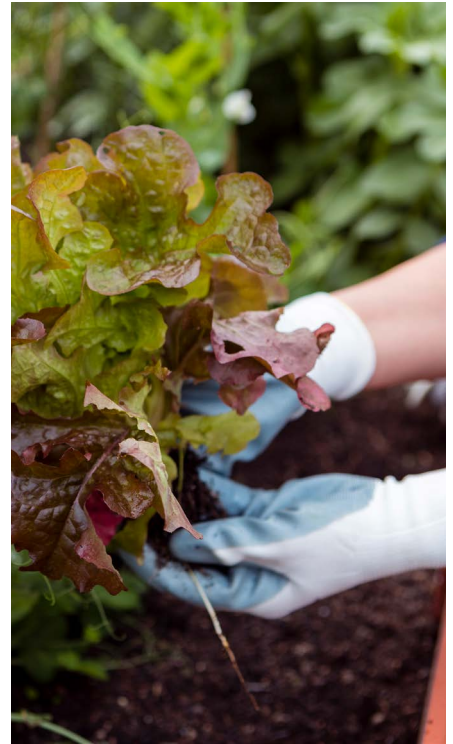
**'5-A-DAY' CONSUMPTION
BY ADULTS
2023/24**

28%

It is important that nutritious food is made more easily accessible, especially within deprived areas across the Borough. Utilising our local farmers and markets is a great first step in securing a healthier, greener Borough for residents.

The processing, transportation, purchasing and waste of our food all contribute to greenhouse gas emissions – estimated around 30% of total emissions comes from our food industries. At the same time, the impacts of climate change threaten the resilience of food systems, particularly through extreme weather events, like flooding and heatwaves. The damage to food systems makes food more expensive, with climate-driven 'climateflation' impacting food prices and accessibility to nutritious food, in turn widening the health inequalities gap.

Buying and eating locally grown food is not only better for the planet, but also better for your health. Local produce is typically fresher and closer to peak ripeness at the time of consumption, due to the reduced transport time, meaning more vitamins, minerals and antioxidants are retained. Eating a balanced diet, with nutrient-dense fruit and vegetables contributes to better overall health and reduces the risks of obesity and diet related illnesses. 70% of adults in Swindon were recorded as being overweight or obese in 2023/24, which is 6% higher than the average for England. Making local, healthier food accessible is important in reducing this.



**OVERWEIGHT
OR OBESE ADULTS**
2023/24

70%

Buying locally also benefits the environment and economy, by reducing transport related emissions and supporting our local farmers and markets. We are working with communities to make local, nutritious food more accessible for everyone in Swindon.



Spotlight: Swindon's Big Crop Drop Week

A Swindon-based initiative that provided information to residents about growing their own produce and how best to use it, as well as the best places around the Borough to buy local, organic food. Local Swindon growers also donated their surplus crops, which were distributed across the Borough via our Crop Drop Bus, which stopped at places like the Swindon Hub and Mountford Manor Primary School.

The Global Gardeners Case Study

Global Gardeners is a community-led initiative, established in 2022 through a collaboration between the Mechanics Institution Trust (MIT) and Swindon Borough Council's Live Well team. The group primarily supports refugees and asylum seekers by creating opportunities to learn, grow food and connect with the community, and have been awarded 'Garden of Sanctuary' status for their efforts.

Improving access to Nutritious food:

Providing free, fresh produce grown on the community allotment.

Sharing surplus food through the MIT weekly community café, increasing access to healthy ingredients and reducing food waste.

Growing different foods from across the world, ensuring access to familiar and culturally meaningful ingredients.

Offering a safe space where attendees can gain knowledge about nutrition, food safety and seasonal produce.

Supporting Physical and Mental Health:

Engagement in regular physical activity, from planting and digging to carpentry and composting.

Opportunities to reduce stress and loneliness, whilst fostering a sense of purpose and belonging.

Volunteers gain the skills and confidence that support the wider determinants of health, including employability, language, learning and independence.



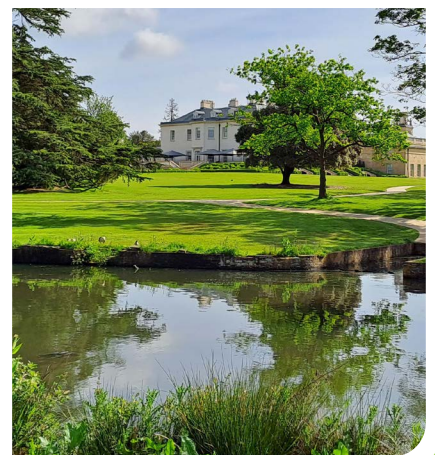
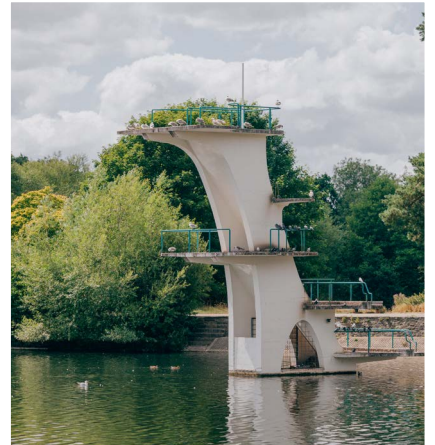
THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEN & BLUE SPACES

Our green and blue spaces –our parks, woodlands, forests, lakes, and wetlands, play a key role in our physical and mental health, whilst also supporting our natural environment.

The UK government report that those who spend two or more hours per week in these spaces are significantly more likely to report better wellbeing and general good health. Specifically, regular exposure to these spaces is linked to reduced risks of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and lower all-cause mortality. Mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression and stress can be reduced through accessing green and blue spaces, and research shows that treatment for common mental health disorders is needed less amongst those who use these spaces regularly.

Environmentally, green and blue spaces contribute to reduced urban temperatures, regulate water, improve air quality and supports wildlife and biodiversity. This supports climate resilience and aids in nature recovery strategies. Green and blue spaces have also been shown to have considerable economic value. A UK focused study estimated that green spaces save the NHS around £111 million per year.

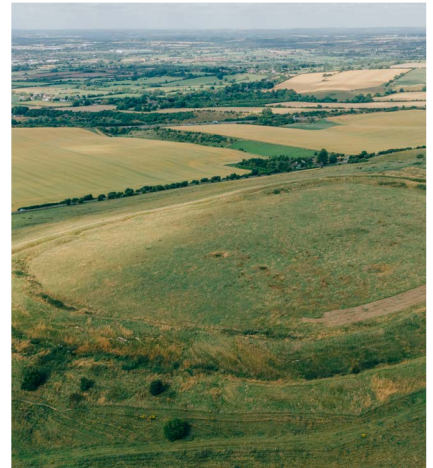
Unfortunately, access to green and blue spaces is not equal. Natural England suggest that those living in the most deprived areas are 10 times less likely to live in the greenest areas. These communities can experience higher exposure to environmental risks including poorer air quality and heat stress as a result, as well as the physical and mental health risks associated with a lack of access to these spaces. Improving access plays a crucial role in preventing health conditions, like anxiety, depression, obesity and long-term health conditions, while also benefitting our environment and equipping neighbourhoods with adequate climate resilience.



Swindon and surrounding areas benefit from a plentiful and diverse network of green and blue spaces, including woodlands, country parks, formal gardens, lakes and rivers. Some of our large country parks include Mouldon Hill, Stanton Park, Coate Water and Lydiard Park provide residents with open spaces, woodlands alongside lakes and rivers.

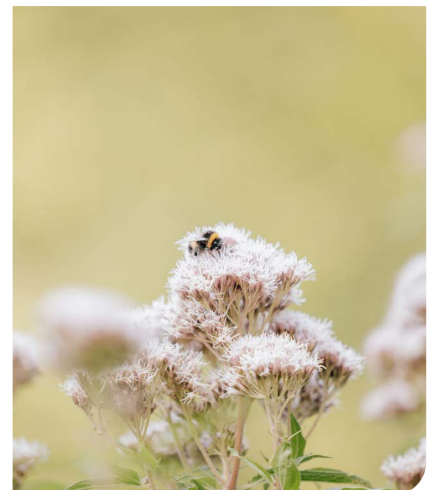
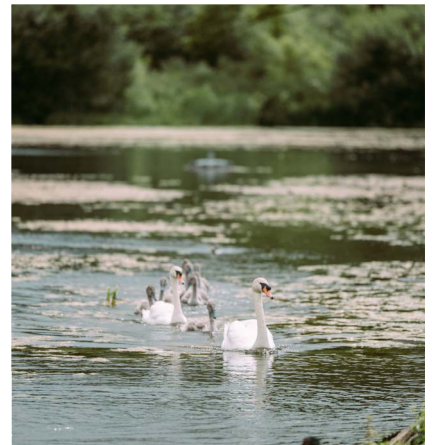


Our Swindon residents have expressed the importance of green and blue spaces within the Borough. Our Swindon 2025 'Let's Talk' event asked people whether they used the green and blue spaces that were local to them. Residents expressed their love for Swindon's parks, and discussed utilising these for dog walking, family outings, sports, and volunteering.



The 2025 Residents Survey identified that 30% of residents view parks and open spaces as one of the most important things needed to make Swindon a good place to live, alongside health services and levels of crime. In 2025, 58% of residents were satisfied with the parks and green spaces within their areas.

We recognise the importance of promoting and preserving these spaces, as outlined through our Green Infrastructure Strategy. The strategy's open space audit identified that Swindon has approximately 1017 hectares of publicly accessible recreational open space, equating to over 5 ha per 1000 people – this is above the adopted local standard of 3.2 ha/1000.



Case Study

GREAT WESTERN COMMUNITY FOREST PLAN: TREES PLANTED FOR SWINDON

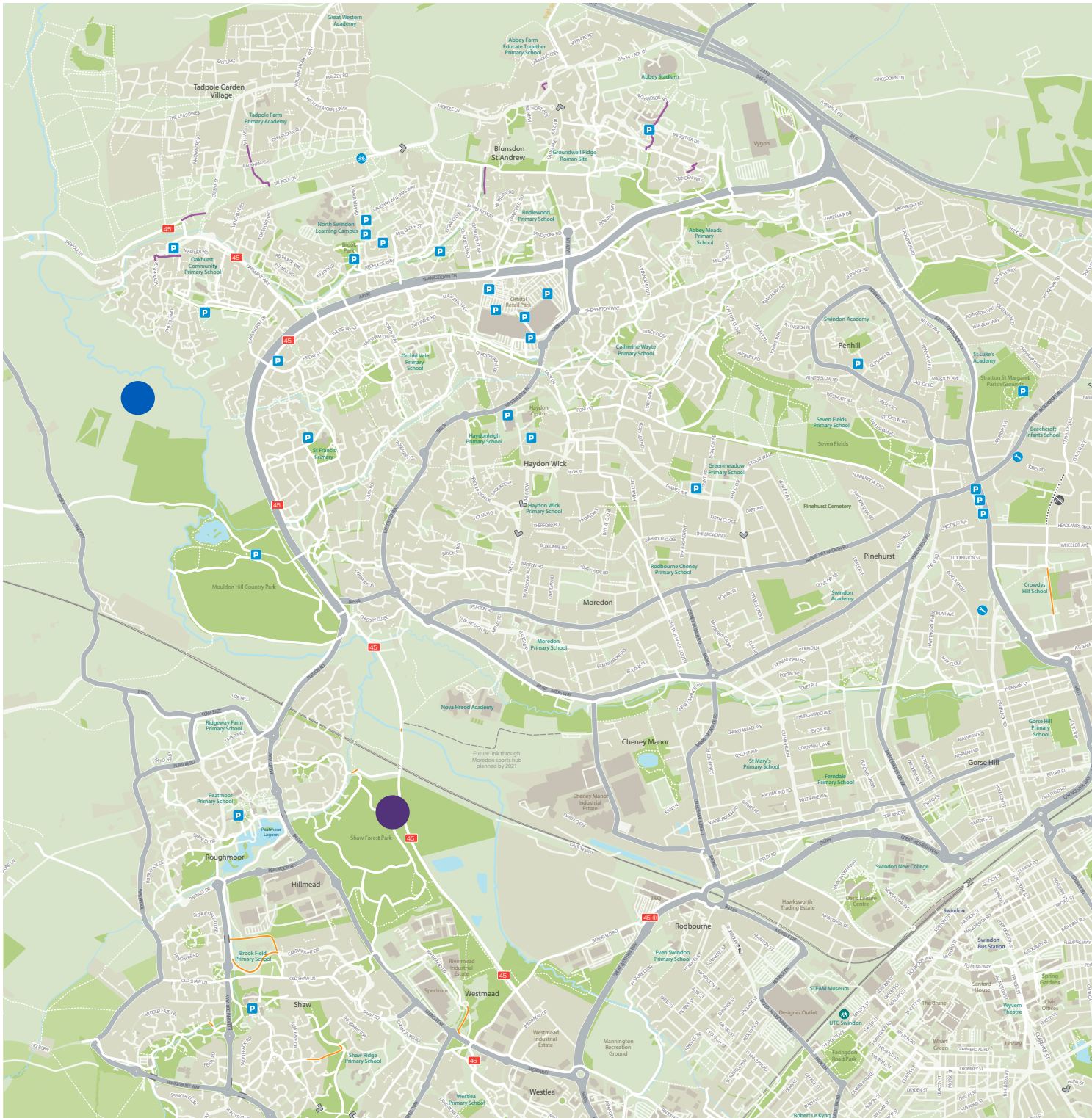
The Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) was founded in 1994, with an aim to bring local people and organisations together to create a better environment for everyone. With the town of Swindon at its heart, GWCF covers 39,000 hectares, stretching from the North Wessex Downs area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the River Thames.

The GWCF's goal is to create an interconnected network of woodlands in response to increasing development pressures. The initiative aims to achieve 30% tree coverage across the area, which includes the whole of the Borough area. Prior to this, the baseline tree coverage within Swindon was 3%.

Between 2000 and 2023, around thirty-five hectares of new woodland (equating to over 40,000 trees!) have been planted across the GWCF. This expansion means the area will remove about 431 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the air every year. Over 30% of the trees planted are in areas that support natural flood management.



This increased woodland coverage across the Borough has incredible benefits for both mental and physical health. The Woodland Trust identify that nature improves our quality of life, with 90% of people acknowledging that woodland biodiversity, like hearing birdsong, boosts their wellbeing. Regular exposure to nature and wildlife has been shown to alleviate symptoms of stress and anxiety, stabilise blood pressure, and reduce the risks of diabetes and heart disease. Green spaces like the woodlands being established through the GWCF foster social connection, reduce loneliness and have measurable benefits in improving mental health.



Nightingale Wood: With three easy access trails, trim trail equipment, and picnic facilities, this is a great family friendly woodland to visit.

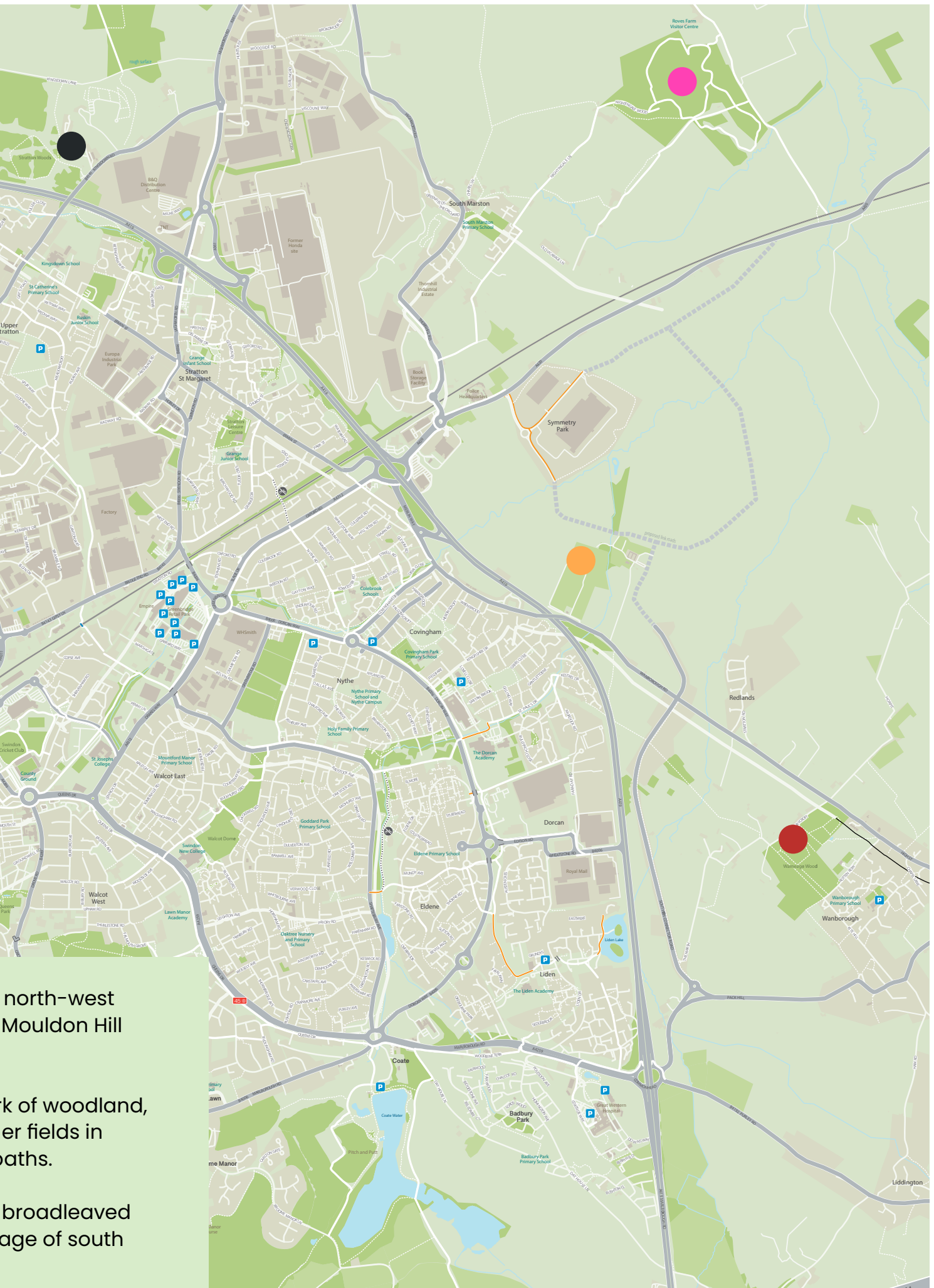
Stanton Park: Includes ancient remnants of broadleaved woodland, grassland and fishing lake. It is also a local nature reserve.

Shaw Forest Park: Boasts an array of habitats ranging from ash and willow woodlands to scrubland containing juniper and alder.

Purton Wood: situated on the edge of Swindon, adjacent to Country Park.

Warneage Wood: a patchwork of grassland and ponds on former farmland near Wanborough, with extensive paths.

Oxleaze Farm: Newly planted woodland (2004) near the village of Marston north of Swindon.



north-west
Mouldon Hill

bank of woodland,
open fields in
paths.

broadleaved
edge of south

CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS AND AIR QUALITY

EXTREME WEATHER

Swindon, like the rest of the UK, is experiencing the effects of extreme weather. The shift in our natural environment poses a growing risk to the health and wellbeing of our residents, particularly those who are already vulnerable. In Swindon, our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA, 2024) identifies an 8-year gap in female life expectancy and a 2.9-year gap in male life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in the Borough. Extreme and unpredictable weather, particularly intense heat has contributed to deaths within the Borough, especially amongst residents over 65 years old. (JSNA, 2024).

To address this, Swindon's Health Protection team works closely with external organisations such as the Met Office and UKHSA to understand weather patterns and longer term climate trends, and the associated impacts on health. Where extreme weather events are predicted, we work jointly with local partners to provide timely guidance to those most likely to be adversely impacted, including the very young, older residents, or rough sleepers. We work closely with Emergency Planning, Live Well teams, Homeless Outreach, Drug and Alcohol treatment services, Adult Social Care providers, Early Years and Education partners as well as the broader health system to ensure that the appropriate mitigations are put in place. This may include providing guidance to settings on how to manage extreme heat, or providing access to cool spaces.



AIR QUALITY

Air pollution is a growing public health concern within the UK, and steps have been taken to mitigate the harmful pollutants, and to reduce the exposure to these pollutants. The main conditions associated with air pollution are respiratory conditions (such as asthma), cardiovascular disease, and lung cancer, and there is emerging evidence for links with dementia, low birth weight and Type 2 diabetes.



LONG-TERM EXPOSURE TO MAN-MADE AIR POLLUTION IN THE UK IS LINKED WITH

**ASTHMA, CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE,
LUNG CANCER, DEMENTIA,
LOW BIRTH WEIGHT AND TYPE 2 DIABETES**

The two main pollutants of concerns in the UK are Nitrogen dioxide^(NO₂) and Fine Particulate Matter^(PM_{2.5}). Nitrogen Dioxide is produced when hydrocarbons are burnt, by vehicles, home heating, cooking, power generation and industry. It is a respiratory irritant and can worsen symptoms of existing respiratory conditions.

Fine particulate matter^(PM_{2.5}) are very small particles released by burning fuel which can penetrate deep into the lungs, resulting in serious health impacts. Government targets commit to reducing the annual average PM_{2.5} (fine particulate matter) by the end of 2040. Meaningful steps have been taken to reduce these pollutants, with the UK compliance assessment in 2024 showing a 22% reduction, in line with interim targets.

Despite this progress, significant health concerns relating to air quality remain. The Royal College of Physicians estimate that air pollution could account for approximately 30,000 deaths per year in the UK, with associated costs to the economy and the NHS over £27 billion annually. Unfortunately, prolonged exposure to these particulates does not impact everyone in the same way and contributes to growing health inequalities within the UK. Research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that, despite PM_{2.5} exposure decreasing significantly, people living in the most deprived 20% of areas are exposed to an 8% higher concentration of these particulates compared to those in the least deprived areas.



Monitoring Air Quality

Local authorities have a statutory duty to manage and monitor air quality, and work with partner organisations to protect public health. It is important that we monitor our rates against the national air quality objectives and identify any areas of the Borough that fall into the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), so that an Air Quality Action plan can be established.

Case Study

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY IN SWINDON

As part of the Government's Clean Air Strategy, air quality is regularly monitored in 23 sites across the Borough by our environmental health team. In 2018, monitoring identified elevated concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) on Kingshill Road, reaching 56 µg/m³— above the statutory annual mean objective of 40 µg/m³. As a result, Swindon declared its first Air Quality Management Area, covering a 280-metre section of Kingshill Road. The first Air Quality Action Plan was published in 2019, and over its five-year duration NO₂ levels fell significantly, approaching the statutory objective.

In December 2023, Cabinet approved the second iteration of the Kingshill Air Quality Action Plan, designed to further reduce NO₂ concentrations from 42 µg/m³ in 2022 to a level that is sustainably below 40 µg/m³.

The current Action Plan focuses on four key priorities:

Implementing the Traffic Regulation Order to restrict most heavy-goods vehicles on Kingshill Road, reducing NO₂ emissions by an estimated 5%.

Working with residents, businesses and community organisations to encourage active travel and public transport use, thereby cutting emissions of harmful pollutants.

Improving and prioritising infrastructure that supports walking and cycling.

Supporting the transition to low-carbon transport across the borough.

As part of this plan, in November 2025 we launched a new initiative that introduces a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to restrict vehicles over 7.5 tonnes from using Kingshill Road. This is expected to reduce 120 daily HGV movements and continue to improve air quality in the area. Full details of these priorities and the planned actions can be found in the Kingshill Air Quality Action Plan.

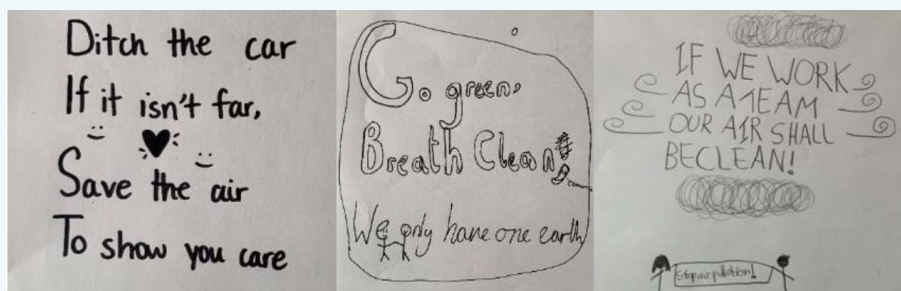
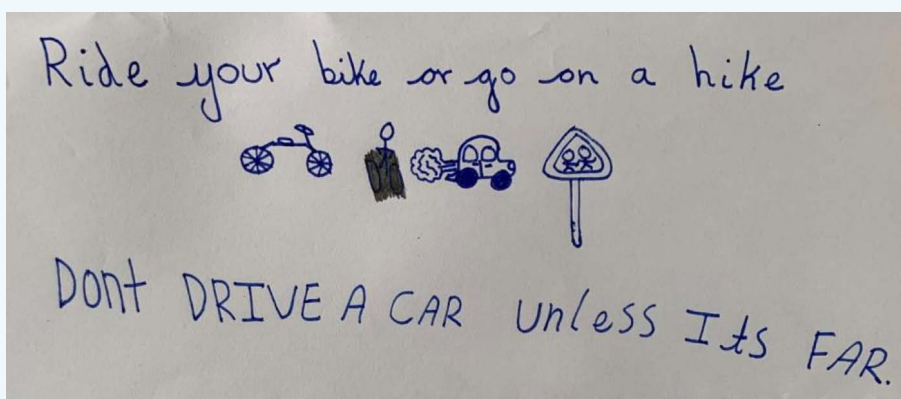


THE AIR QUALITY PROGRAMME IN SWINDON: ENGAGEMENT WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

As part of the air quality programme undertaken by our Public Health team between 2023-2025, we visited Primary Schools across the Borough, to talk to children about air quality, understand the damage caused by air pollution, and offer small changes that everyone can make to prevent air pollution.

Overall, 12 primary schools participated across Swindon, and over 2000 children were involved in these workshops. Imaginative laws were suggested, and signposts designed, demonstrating the small steps that everyone can take to improve air quality.

As part of this air quality engagement programme, a theatre company visited primary schools within our targeted postcodes to deliver an interactive educational performance. Performance in Education delivered its interactive show 'Abbie Ayre and the Shed of Science' – reaching over 400 pupils. This performance focused on helping children understand what air pollution is, how it affects health and what actions individuals can take to reduce pollution. Feedback from schools was overwhelmingly positive, with teachers reporting the pupils gained a good understanding of air quality and felt empowered to make positive change.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ACTIVE TRAVEL

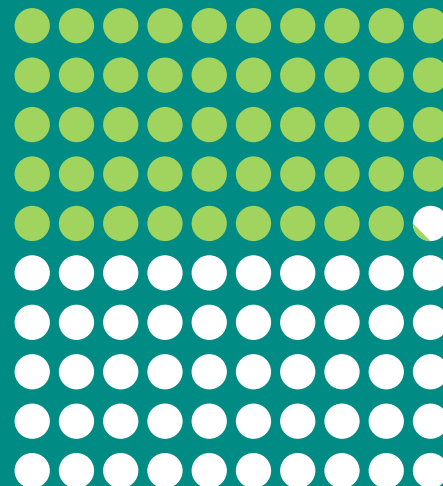


Increasing physical activity through active travel, i.e. by walking, running and cycling instead of taking the car, is hugely beneficial to both our health and the environment. The NHS recommends that adults aged 19–64 do at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week, and active travel options can contribute to this total, saving time and money.

Promoting and encouraging active travel opportunities can help to embed physical activity into everyday life, and is a sustainable first step in improving health, preventing illness and preserving the planet. Research shows that swapping the car for walking or cycling during everyday journeys can have a meaningful impact on overall health across the life course, while reducing air pollution and traffic congestion – which further benefits health.

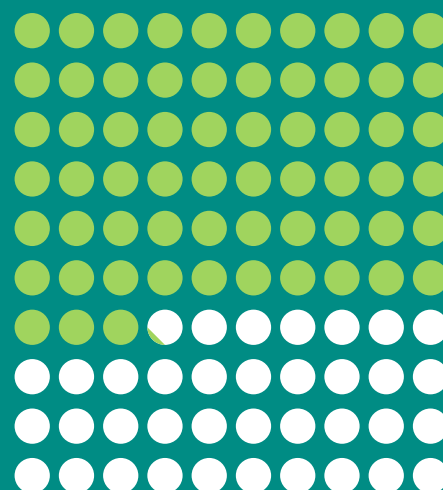
For the environment, transport remains one of the UK's greatest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. By promoting active travel options, and making active travel more accessible, local authorities can contribute to limiting emissions, decreasing pollution and mitigating climate change.

Physical inactivity remains an important public health concern across the UK, contributing to health conditions including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and poor mental health. In Swindon, 52% of children aged 5 to 16 are physically active, and 65% of adults regularly exercise.



49.1%

**CHILDREN AGED 5 TO 16
ARE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE**



63.1%

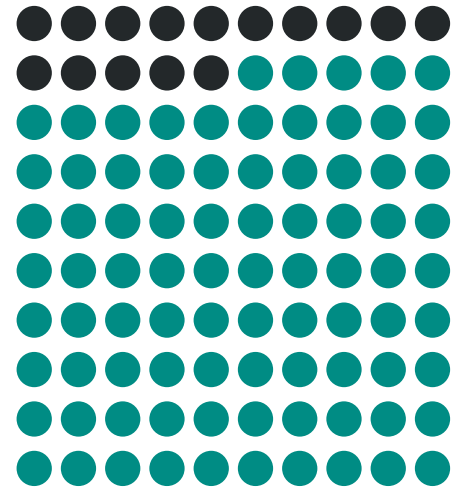
**ADULTS REGULARLY
EXERCISE**

SWINDON'S COMMITMENT TO ACTIVE TRAVEL

In Swindon, we want to promote opportunities for active travel for all. In 2022, 15% of adults in Swindon walked for travel at least three times per week. To increase this, we have adopted a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). This plan identifies key schemes that will enable active travel to be direct, safe, attractive, and comfortable for residents. To help achieve these priorities, the council secured a £381,500 grant in May 2023 from Active Travel England to aid necessary improvements to walking and cycle routes. The funding was allocated to make meaningful improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes across the borough, including enhancements to cycle connectivity in the town centre, as well as critical links in the north and east of Swindon.

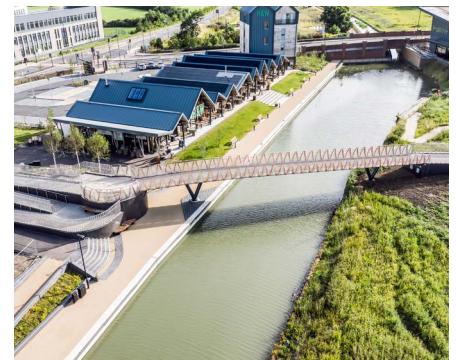
Throughout this plan, Swindon Borough Council has committed to public engagement and consultation, reaching out to walking, cycling, and access groups to ensure that new routes are inclusive for people with disabilities, safe for all users, and responsive to community needs.

The Swindon Local Plan encourages the integration of active travel opportunities through future green infrastructure, open spaces and street design plans, to promote better mobility, wellbeing and environmental resilience.



15%

**PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS
WALKING FOR TRAVEL AT LEAST
THREE DAYS PER WEEK**



Spotlight: Wichelstowe Development **Gold standard Modeshift STARS travel plan accreditation**

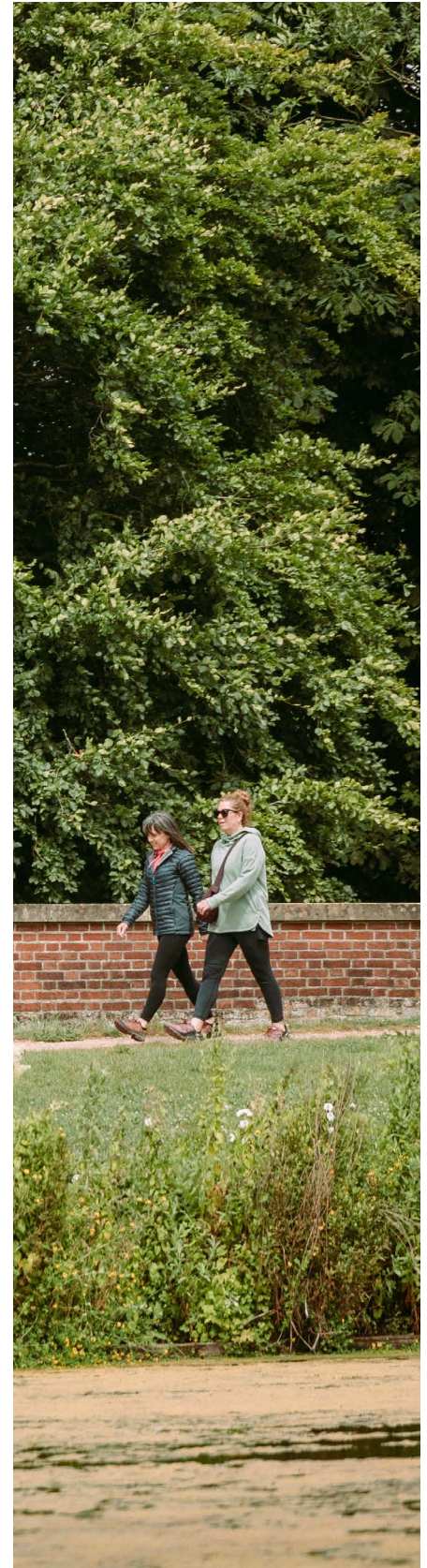
The Wichelstowe development is a strong example of forward-thinking planning that supports both public health and the environment. This new housing area embeds prevention-focused active travel initiatives into the core design of the community. High-quality walking and cycling routes, alongside accessible public spaces, make active travel the easier, more cost-effective and the more appealing option for everyday journeys. This award-winning travel plan shows how sustainable mobility can become a routine part of daily life through thoughtful design and early-stage planning. By creating an environment where trips to school, work and local services can be made safely on foot or by bike, Wichelstowe helps to increase physical activity levels, reduce air pollution and contribute to long-term carbon reduction.

Case Study

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INITIATIVES ACROSS THE BOROUGH: GET SWINDON ACTIVE

The Get Swindon Active Plan is committed to integrating physical activity and active travel into everyday life, making movement more accessible and a sustainable part of how people work, live and play. Working collaboratively with our partners including, parish councils, schools, employers and voluntary organisations, we aim to tackle barriers that prevent people from being active, especially among those often underrepresented in physical activities.

Get Swindon Active fosters community centred and inclusive physical activity including access to leisure centres, inclusive cycling sessions, free guided walking groups and 'give it a go' programmes to encourage people of different ages, abilities and backgrounds to get moving.



Case Study

TRANSFORMING BUCKHURST FIELD INTO A COMMUNITY SPORT & LEISURE HUB

Buckhurst field is located within one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Swindon and falls within the top 10% most deprived areas nationally. The area has poor health outcomes, including 43% of year 6 children being classed as obese.

South Swindon Parish Council has developed a multi-component improvement programme with partner organisations to address these health outcomes.

The work included:

Refurbishment of the existing play area

Refurbishment of the skate park

Reinstatement of five junior football pitches with changing room upgrades

Tree and shrub planting

Development of a new walking and cycling route across the field

Redevelopment of the existing multi-use games area into a multi-sport play zone

Given its location of an area of high deprivation and limited existing provision, the redevelopment of Buckhurst Field aims to increase opportunities for physical activity across multiple groups, including those currently under-represented in sport.



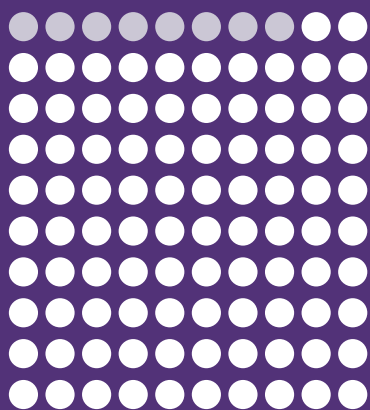
HOUSING



Housing quality and energy efficiency within homes is becoming an increasingly important public health concern, as changing, unpredictable and extreme weather patterns intersect with our built environment.

Finding ways to improve the comfort, energy efficiency and resilience of homes is crucial for both environmental and public health. Improving insulation and ventilation, upgrading heating systems and investing in renewable electricity within the home all contribute to reducing fuel poverty, lowering energy costs, cutting emissions and protecting residents from temperature related health risks.

Across the Borough, we continue to take meaningful steps to improve housing quality and reduce carbon emissions. Approximately 8% of households within Swindon experience fuel poverty based on the 'low income, low energy efficiency' (LILEE) methodology. Our five-year, £30 million retrofit programme focuses on improving the energy efficiency and climate resilience of our housing stock, by upgrading our homes, including new double and triple glazed windows, modernising insulated doors and improving the roof structure of properties. This will help in reducing heat loss in winter, whilst also minimising overheating in summer. Properties with the poorest current energy performance will be targeted first on this scheme, helping to lift homes towards an EPC rating of C or higher. This approach will reduce carbon emissions whilst tackling health inequalities by prioritising households most at risk of fuel poverty, respiratory conditions and heart related illnesses.



8%

FUEL POVERTY (LOW INCOME, LOW ENERGY EFFICIENCY) 2023

Poorly insulated, inefficient housing put households at risk of cold-related harm, including fuel poverty, respiratory disease, cardiovascular stress, and heat-related harms through exacerbation of chronic illnesses, overheating and sleep disturbances⁽³¹⁾. Research indicates that the proportion of UK homes reporting overheating during the summer months has risen by 18% between 2011-2022⁽³²⁾, taking the total up to 80% of UK homes. Residential housing remains one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions – around 14% of total UK emissions⁽³¹⁾.

SPOTLIGHT: WARM AND SAFE WILTSHIRE

Warm and Safe Wiltshire is an initiative set up by Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council to address fuel poverty which has been running since 2017. Warm and Safe Wiltshire acts as a single point of contact for energy advice with the aim of reducing fuel poverty in Wiltshire and Swindon and reducing the impact on the health system, through minimising hospital admissions and preventable deaths, especially in the winter months. Warm & Safe Wiltshire provides valuable financial assistance for energy costs and routes into schemes for energy saving measures alongside behavioural support to lower energy use and manage bills. The estimated savings on energy bills for residents since the programme started is almost £1m.



THE SOLAR TOGETHER PROJECT

The Solar Together Project is a group-buying scheme delivered by Swindon Borough Council in partnership with Wiltshire Council and iChoosr. By securing lower installation costs through a collective purchasing model, the scheme has enabled residents to take part in the solar initiative at a lower cost compared to purchasing independently.

Since 2022, over 600 Swindon households have installed solar systems through the scheme, contributing to an overall increase in renewable energy sources across the Borough, as well as increased long-term savings on electricity bills for residents. Solar Together reduces exposure to volatile energy prices – a key driver of fuel poverty – and promotes warmer, safer houses while contributing to a cleaner local environment.

The programme's contribution to improved air quality has and will continue to have population level health benefits. By increasing local renewable energy capacity, the scheme also decreases the need for fossil-fuel generation, helping to lower emissions contributing to poor air quality.



RECOMMENDATIONS

This report outlines the key links between our environment and our health. This is particularly important for groups who experience the greatest health burdens – including children, older people, people with disabilities, people living in poverty and marginalised communities – who are more likely to be exposed to poor housing, polluted environments, food insecurity and limited access to safe open spaces.

The recommendations outline some meaningful steps that we can take as individuals, as a community, and as a council to improve health outcomes for everyone across the Borough. Together, these actions can create a town that supports healthier, more sustainable lives for all our residents.



GREEN AND BLUE SPACES



What can Individuals do?

Increasing the time spent in Swindon's parks, woodlands, waterways and open spaces supports physical and mental health. These spaces encourage physical activity and boost mood, improve air quality and help residents to build social connections, all of which reduce health related risks.

What can Communities and Our Partners do?

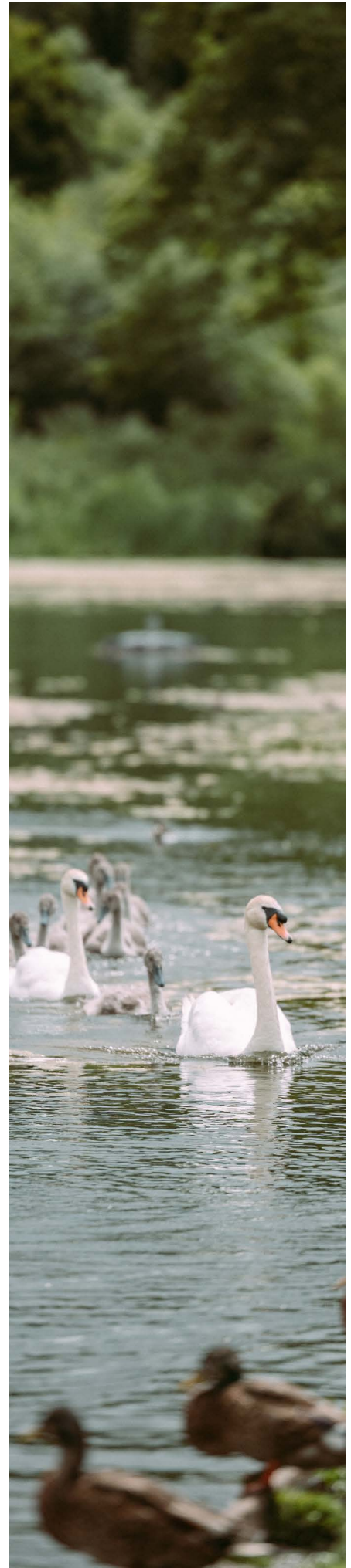


Our communities and partners play a vital role in protecting and utilising our green and blue spaces. By encouraging engagement within these spaces, through activities like walking groups, community gardening, nature-based wellbeing programmes and other outdoor activities, we can ensure meaningful steps are being taken to improve and maintain the health and wellbeing of our residents. Embedding the use of these spaces through our health, education and housing partners will encourage individuals to utilise these spaces further, particularly by groups who may face barriers to participation.

What can the Council do?



As a council, it is important that we make these spaces as accessible as possible. We can support this work by treating green and blue spaces as essential health infrastructure and protecting these spaces through planning policy, targeted investment for areas with poorer access and ensuring regeneration projects include safe and accessible green and blue spaces.



HOUSING

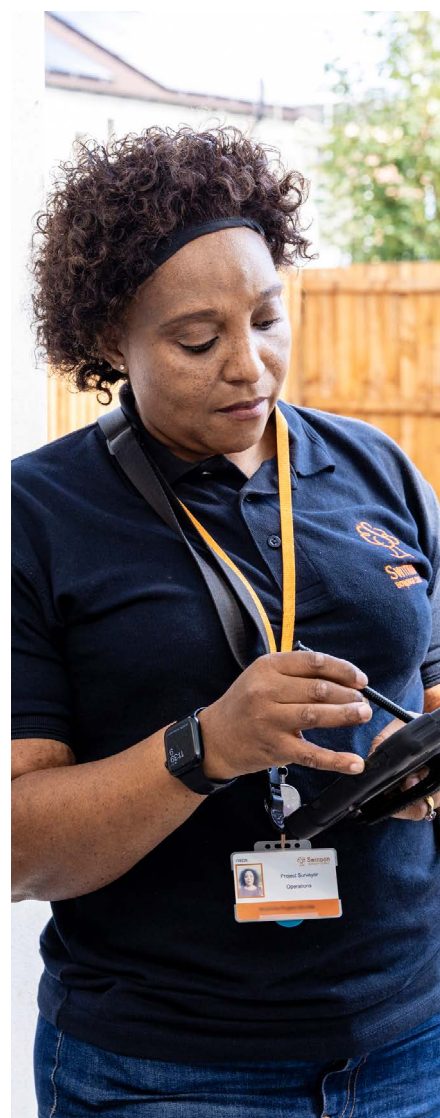
What can Individuals do?

Houses that are well-maintained, energy efficient and well-ventilated are less likely to experience damp, mould, and overheating – all of which can worsen our physical and mental health. Simple actions at home like keeping living spaces dry and ventilated, checking insulation and using energy-efficient appliances where possible can improve comfort whilst also reducing rising energy costs.



What can Communities and Our Partners do?

Our partners can support residents to improve their housing conditions through advice on better ventilation, energy efficiency and accessing available support, as well as helping to identify and support vulnerable households during extreme hot and cold weather spells. Our partners across health, housing and social care can help identify those most at risk from poor housing or extreme temperatures and ensure appropriate support is provided.



What can the Council do?

The council has a critical role in ensuring that new housing is built to a high standard for energy efficiency, ventilation and overheating prevention, whilst also prioritising the retrofit of existing homes, particularly for low-income households, older residents and those with long term conditions. The new housing law, Awaab's Law, effective from October 2025, sets stricter timeframes for investigating and fixing serious hazards within the home, like damp and mould. By working closely with our residents and partners we can detect and resolve housing issues faster to ensure good quality housing is available for all.



ACTIVE TRAVEL

What can Individuals do?

Swindon residents record lower levels of walking and cycling for journeys compared with national averages. Small changes to the way we travel can have a big impact on health and the environment – if able, walking or cycling even for short journeys will improve your health, and active travel options are often more cost effective!



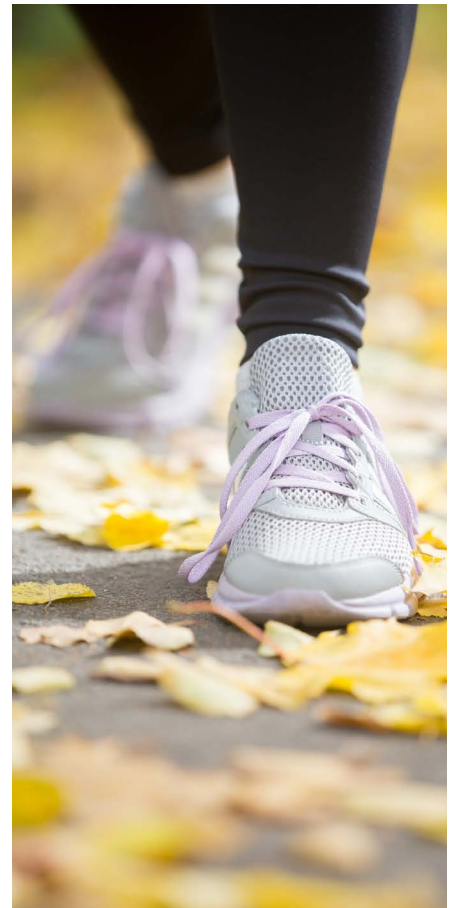
What can Communities and Our Partners do?

Community groups and voluntary organisations can promote walking, cycling and local physical activity through events, peer support and local campaigns. They can also help identify barriers to being active, particularly amongst children, older people and people with disabilities. Partners such as our schools, employers and health services can support this through school and workplace travel plans and promoting the health benefits of physical activity.



What can the Council do?

The Council can enable and promote a shift towards active travel by investing in safe, accessible walking and cycling infrastructure, improving lighting and accessible crossings, whilst aligning transport, planning and public health strategies to reduce car dependencies and make active travel the more desirable, cost-effective choice for transport.



FOOD AND HEALTHY EATING



What can Individuals do?

In Swindon, local strategies to support healthier weight emphasise the role of the local food environment – including affordability, availability, and skills for cooking healthy meals – in shaping dietary habits. Simple actions like choosing seasonal produce, planning meals, and sharing healthy recipes within local community groups not only improve individual health but can reduce food waste and the environmental impact of our diets.

What can Communities and Our Partners do?

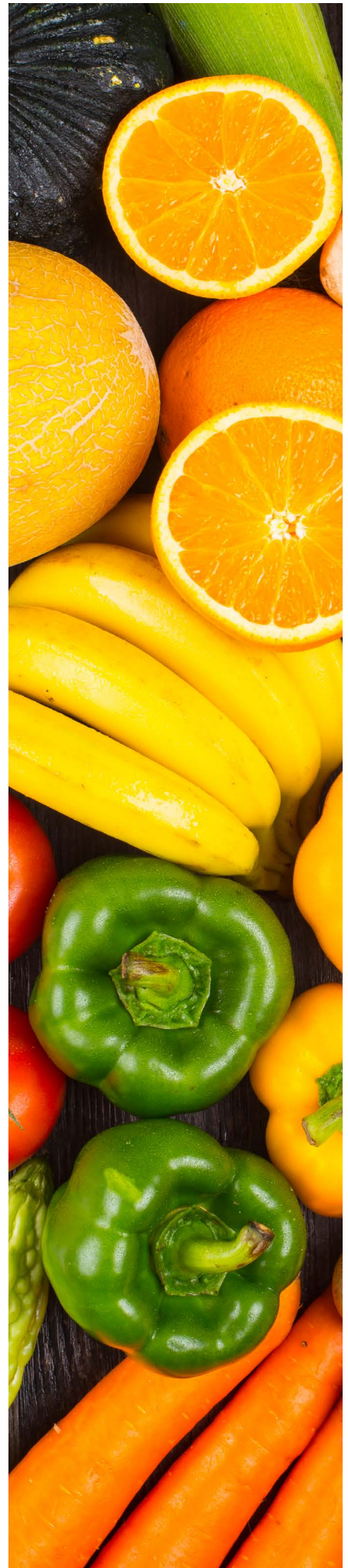


Our community and voluntary organisations can support healthier and more sustainable eating through community food projects, skills development programmes, food growing initiatives and by sharing practical information about healthy, affordable meals and steps to reduce food waste. Our partners, particularly those working across health, education and social care, can help by embedding healthy eating advice into their everyday services and work closely with the council to improve access to healthy food, particularly in more deprived neighbourhoods where rates of food insecurity, childhood obesity and diet related illness are highest.

What can the Council do?



The council can support healthier food environments through planning and licensing, by limiting unhealthy food facilities and advertising. It is also important to support local food partnerships, sustainable food strategies and continue to address food insecurity as a health and environmental priority, recognising its disproportionate impact on marginalised and vulnerable communities.



AIR QUALITY

What can Individuals do?



Simple actions such as walking or cycling instead of driving for short trips, avoiding engine idling, and choosing cleaner travel options can help reduce pollution locally. On days when air pollution is higher, people can also reduce their own exposure by avoiding busy roads and limiting strenuous outdoor activity near traffic.

What can Communities and Our Partners do?

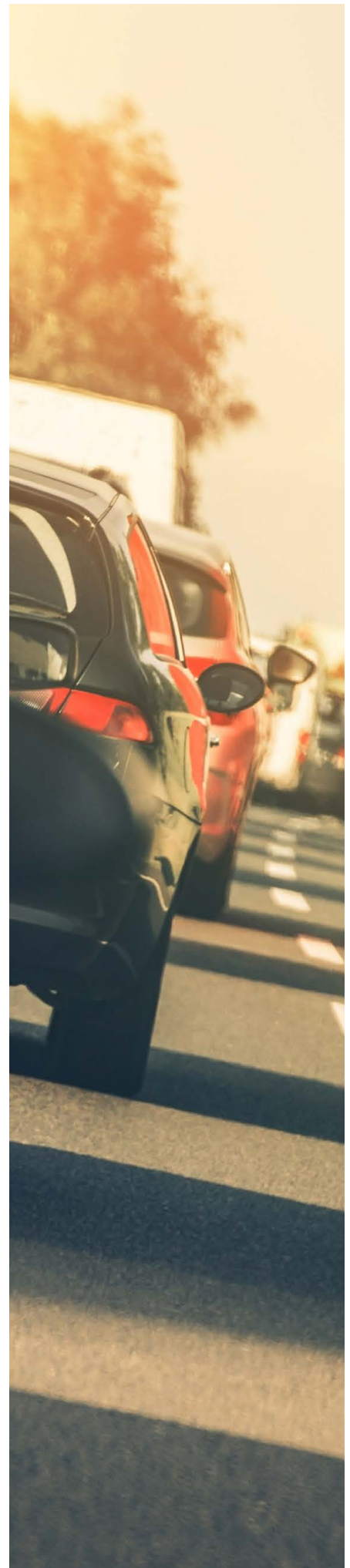


Our communities and partner organisations can raise awareness of the health implications of air pollution and encourage meaningful actions to reduce this, like avoiding engine idling and choosing active travel options where possible. There are opportunities to work with schools and neighbourhoods to reduce pollution around sites such as schools and care homes. Integrating air quality discussions into health, transport, education and housing strategies can support initiatives like workplace travel plans and clean air campaigns – which contribute to behavioural change.

What can the Council do?



The council can continue to monitor air quality and expand our low-emission transport and electric vehicle infrastructure. It is important that we utilise planning and transport policies to reduce traffic and improve air quality, especially in residential areas and in neighbourhoods with higher deprivation, where traffic and healthy vulnerability often overlap.



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Thanks to colleagues who have contributed to the development and production of this report including Sophie Hicks and Hannah Hardy, as well as colleagues across the council who have contributed to the featured initiatives . Lastly thank you to all of our residents for every small action you take to make Swindon a greener and healthier place for all of us.