



Environmental Audit Committee

Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

18 September 2026

Sent by email only

Air Pollution Inquiry: request for written evidence

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 10 September.

As a member of the ministerial team was unable to attend the Environmental Audit Committee's session on 14 September for its inquiry into air pollution, we wish to raise specific questions with yourselves through correspondence. These are questions which would have been put to the department if a member of the ministerial team had attended. We would request a written response by the 25 September 2026. This is so my committee can begin work on our report as soon as possible.

It should be noted that during the evidence session both Ministers Hardy (Defra) and Johnson (DHSC) noted that your department would be better suited to answer specific questions, and that responsibility for certain areas lie within MHCLG and so they would not be able to comment.

The specific questions we would like you to answer are:

- Minister Hardy commented on the lack of minister-to-minister collaboration between Defra and MHCLG, with any cross-government working occurring between officials instead. Can you please set out how your department works with Defra in relation to air quality, what conversations have taken place, and if there are any plans to work more closely with Defra in future?
- The revised National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on delivering housing and economic growth, yet new developments can lock in emissions and exposure for decades. Both DHSC and Defra ministers commented on building regulations and ventilation being particularly important in order to avoid unnecessary exposure to harmful pollutants. Why does the revised NPPF

not include stronger requirements for developments to deliver measurable improvements in air quality?

- Why is air quality treated largely as a constraint to be mitigated in the planning system, rather than as an outcome that new development should actively improve?
- Given the known contribution of construction dust and diesel machinery to particulate matter pollution, why has the department not introduced stronger national requirements or mandated best practice mitigation measures such as dust suppression or low emission machinery?
- What steps is MHCLG taking to address capacity constraints within local authorities, particularly environmental health and transport planning teams?
- Both Defra and DHSC commented on the importance of funding resources for devolved powers, particularly for deprived communities and that this was an area your department was best suited to provide evidence on. Can you set out how much ring-fenced vs general funding is available to councils specifically for air quality work?
 - How are funding allocations designed to account for areas with the highest pollution burdens, particularly where there are limited local revenue-raising options?
 - Are councils being given multi-year funding certainty to deliver long-term air quality interventions such as Clean Air Zones or infrastructure upgrades?

In accordance with standard committee working practices, I will be publishing this letter and your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Toby Perkins', written in a cursive style.

Mr Toby Perkins MP
Chair, Environmental Audit Committee