

Air Quality in Exeter: Non-Technical Summary 2026

Air quality across Exeter generally meets national objectives, with long-term monitoring showing consistent downward trends in pollutant concentrations. The city performs well overall, with only one identified small area where nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels have exceeded the government's objectives in the last three calendar years. However, in 2025, no location in Exeter exceeded the government's objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), which was also the case in 2024.

This report provides an overview of the monitoring undertaken by Exeter City Council and presents the latest data on air pollution levels within the city.

The Air Quality Management Area and the Air Quality Action Plan

An **Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)** is declared when monitoring identifies an exceedance of a national air quality objective. With an AQMA, the Council must implement measures aimed at improving air quality.

Exeter's AQMA aims to address levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) within the defined area for both the **1-hour mean** and **annual mean objectives**.

When an AQMA is declared, the local authority must prepare an **Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)** setting out actions to achieve compliance with the objectives. Exeter's current AQAP was published in **2018** and runs until **2024**. It includes **17 measures** designed to reduce pollutant concentrations and limit exposure to air pollution, thereby improving health and quality of life for residents and visitors.

A new AQAP is currently being drafted and will be informed by the latest monitoring results. Public consultation on the new AQAP is currently underway in accordance with statutory requirements.

Further details of the Council's Air Quality Action Plan can be found on the Exeter City Council website under [**Air Quality Action Plan**](#).

Monitoring

Automatic monitoring

Exeter City Council operates two automatic (continuous) monitoring stations:

- **Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Queen Street**
- **Alphington Street**

In **2025**, the RAMM site measured **nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)**, **ozone (O₃)** and **particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})**. The Alphington Street site monitored **PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}**.

The NO₂ monitor at Exeter Roadside is part of the [**UK Automatic Urban and Rural Network \(AURN\)**](#), with data collected and ratified by the AURN. Particulate data is collected, validated and ratified by Exeter City Council.

Non-automatic monitoring

In 2025, Exeter City Council carried out non-automatic (passive) monitoring of NO₂ at **84 sites** across the city using **diffusion tubes**.

Diffusion tubes are small clear plastic tubes with a grey cap containing a steel mesh disc coated with a chemical that absorbs NO₂. As gases pass over the mesh, the chemical changes, indicating the NO₂ concentration during the monitoring period.

These tubes are positioned throughout the city on lamp-posts and drainpipes at locations chosen to represent relevant exposure points while avoiding interference from other pollution sources. Tubes are collected and replaced monthly, then sent to a laboratory for analysis.

A map of monitoring locations and the AQMA can be found on **page 6** of this document. An interactive map is available on the Exeter City Council website under [Air Quality Monitoring](#).

Air Quality in 2025

Monitoring data is ratified and adjusted to allow comparison with England's statutory air quality objectives as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Air quality objectives for England

Pollutant	Concentration	Measured as
PM ₁₀	50 µg/m ³ , not to be exceeded more than 35 times a year	24-hour average
PM ₁₀	40 µg/m ³	Annual average
NO ₂	200 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 18 times a year	1-hour average
NO ₂	40 µg/m ³	Annual average
PM _{2.5}	20 µg/m ³	Annual average
PM _{2.5}	10 µg/m ³ target by 2040	Annual average

PM₁₀

Since August 2018, Exeter City Council has operated two continuous PM₁₀ analysers. However, equipment faults at the **Exeter Roadside (RAMM)** site meant that no PM₁₀ data was available from this location in 2025.

The **Alphington Street** roadside site recorded an annual mean concentration of **17.0 µg/m³**, well below the objective of 40µg/m³. There were **seven exceedances** of the 24-hour mean objective (50µg/m³) at the Alphington Road site in 2025 which is within the limit of 35 exceedances per year.

Table 2: PM₁₀ annual mean concentrations since 2020

Site Name	2021 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
Exeter Roadside (RAMM)	13.9	17.1(19.2)	18.8 (20.1)	-	-
Alphington Street	12.0	14.7	15.2	14.1	17.0

PM_{2.5}

Similarly, Exeter City Council operates two continuous PM_{2.5} analysers. Due to equipment faults at RAMM, no PM_{2.5} data was available from that site in 2025.

The **Alphington Street** site recorded an annual mean of **10.1 µg/m³**, well below the current limit (20µg/m³) and slightly over the 2040 target (10µg/m³).

Table 3: PM_{2.5} annual mean concentrations since 2020

Site Name	2021 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
Exeter Roadside (RAMM)	8.4	11.1 (12.7)	13.2	-	-
Alphington Street	7.5	9.0	8.8	8.5	10.1

NO₂

Diffusion tube monitoring in 2025 showed **no** exceedances of the annual mean objective (40µg/m³) at any site. This is the **second year** all measurements have been below the objective, marking a significant milestone in Exeter's air quality improvement.

East Wonford Hill, the only site above the objective in 2021, 2022 and 2023, recorded 34.2µg/m³ in 2025, 5.8µg/m³ below the limit.

Table 4: NO₂ annual mean concentrations since 2020 for East Wonford Hill

Site Name	2021 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
East Wonford Hill	42.2	40.4	40.5	38.1	34.2

Trend analysis:

- Significant reduction in NO₂ between **2019 and 2020**, likely due to COVID-19 restrictions and changes in travel behaviour.
- Partial rebound in 2021, followed by stable levels through to 2025.
- Improvements attributed to:
 - Reduced traffic flows.
 - Cleaner vehicle technologies.
 - Measures in the Air Quality Action Plan.
 - Natural variability (roadworks, weather patterns, etc.).

Full NO₂ data for all the diffusion tubes and the RAMM continuous monitor (2021-2025) is available on pages 7 to 12 of this document.

Long-Term Trends in Air Quality

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate a clear downward trend in annual average concentrations of **NO₂** and **PM₁₀** since around 2009. For NO₂, this reduction is clear at both **urban background** and **roadside** monitoring sites.

This sustained improvement is particularly encouraging given the significant housing and commercial development in Exeter over the same period. However, it has not been possible to attribute this trend to any single national or local intervention. Some degree of **year-to-year** variability is expected due to factors such as **weather conditions** and temporary changes in traffic patterns.

Figure 1: Trends in annual mean NO₂ concentrations at the continuous monitoring site between 1997 and 2025. There were no exceedances of the annual mean objective in 2025. There is a general trend of reduction since 2010.

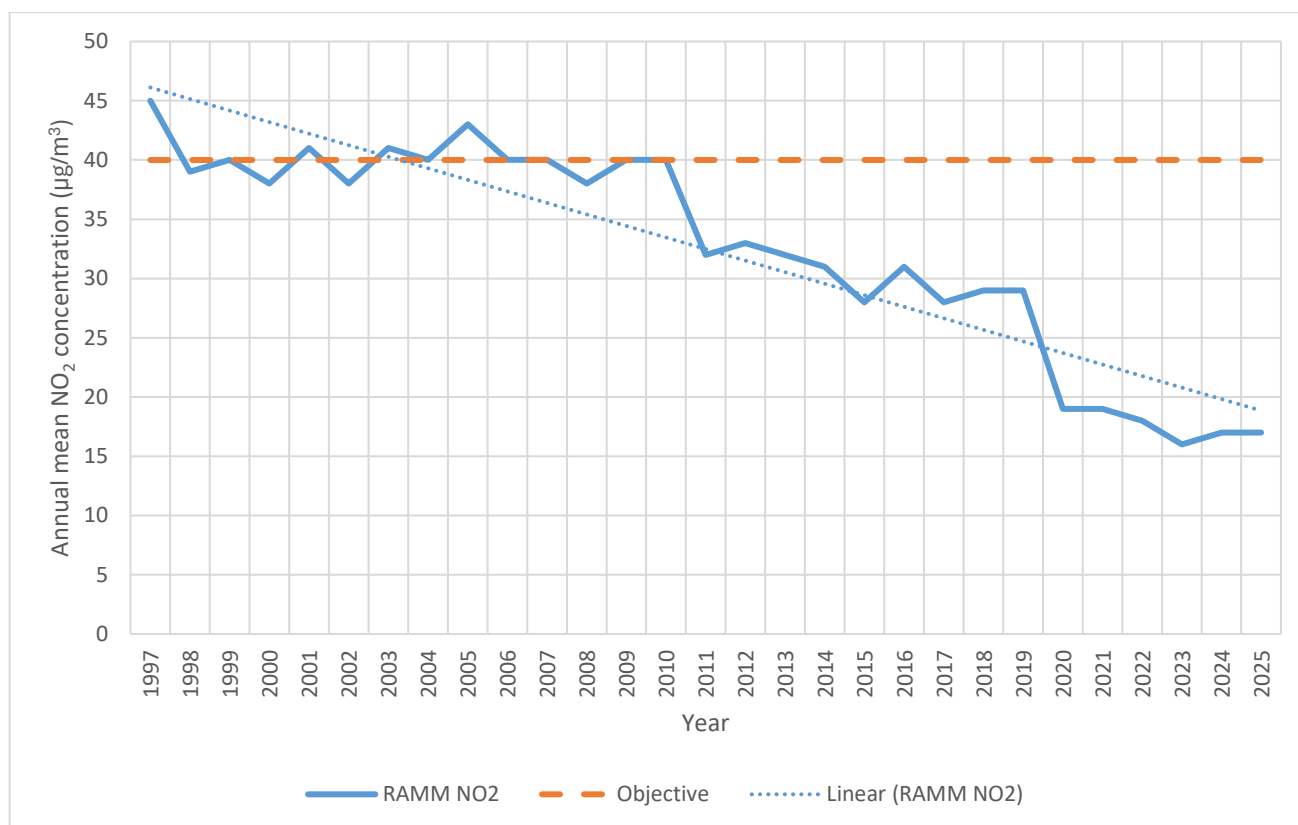
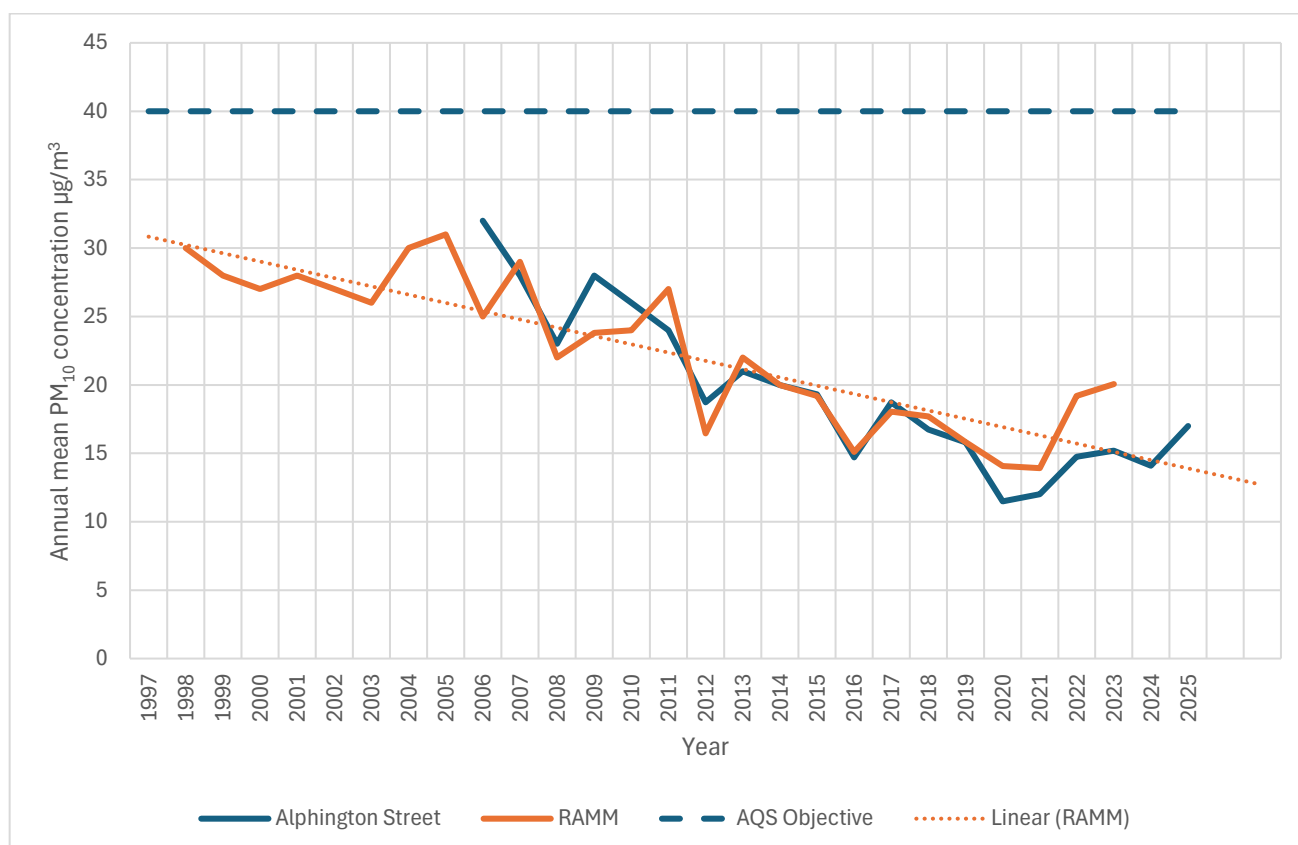


Figure 2: Trends in annual mean PM₁₀ concentrations for the two monitoring sites in Exeter between 1998 and 2025. There were no exceedances of the annual mean objective in 2025 although concentrations have increased since 2021. Otherwise, there is a general trend of reduction across both sites.



Further Information

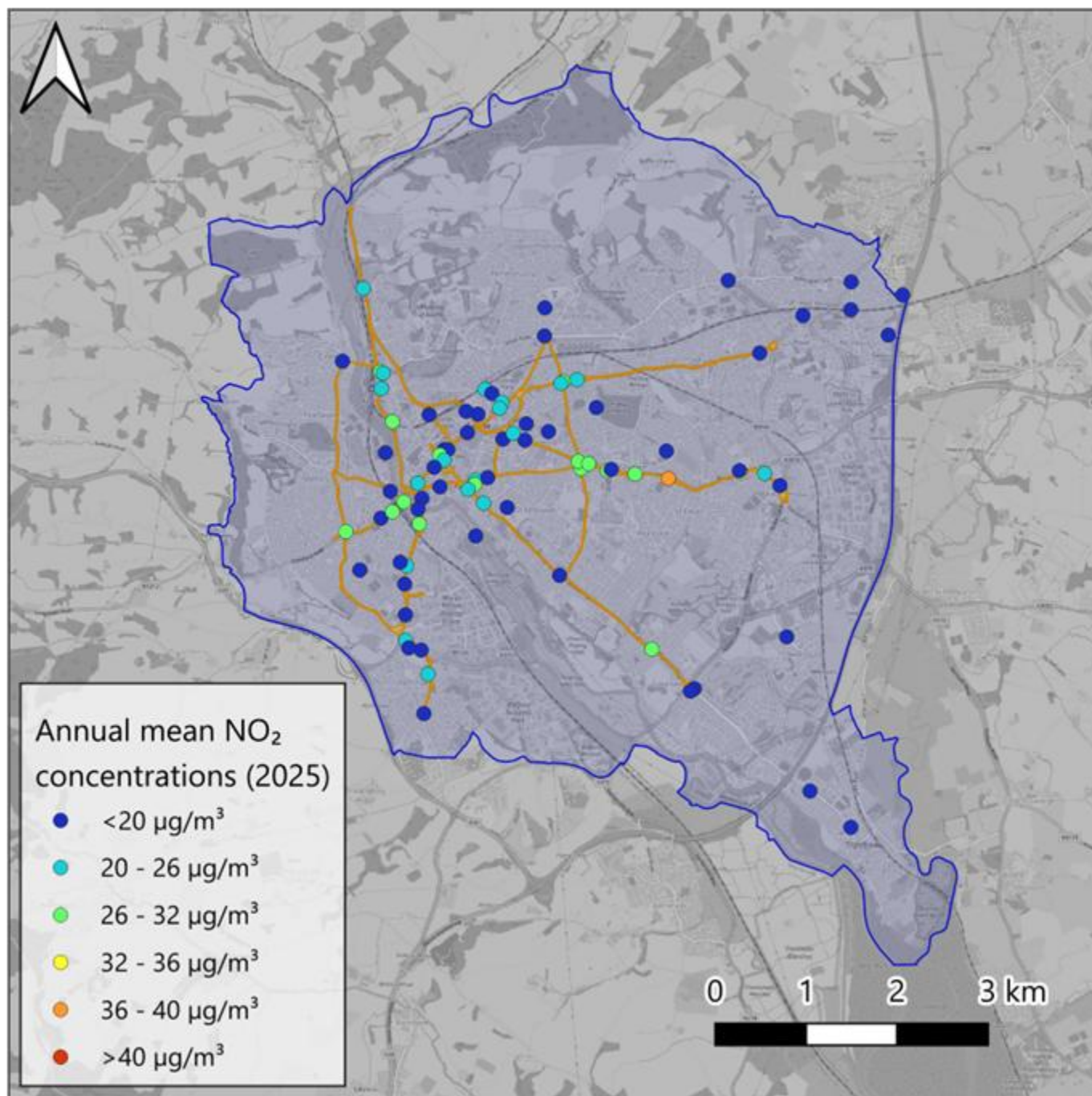
Exeter City Council publishes an **Annual Status Report (ASR)** each year, providing a more detailed summary of the city's latest air pollution levels and actions being taken to reduce pollution.

The report covering work during **2025** is available to download at the [exeter.gov.uk](https://www.exeter.gov.uk/exeter-air-quality) webpage on air quality monitoring ([Annual Status Report 2026](#)).

Exeter's air quality monitoring locations and AQMA

Distribution of NO₂ monitoring locations, showing concentrations of annual mean NO₂ where dark blue = lowest and meeting WHO guideline values; red = highest and exceeding legal limits.

Blue area = Exeter City Council local authority boundary; and orange = extent of the Exeter Air Quality Management Area.



Annual average NO₂ monitoring results since 2021

- **Exceedances** of the NO₂ annual average objective (40µg/m³) are shown in **bold**.
- NO₂ annual averages exceeding **60µg/m³**, which may indicate a potential exceedance of the 1-hour mean objective are shown in **bold and underlined**.
- An asterisk (*) after the site name indicates that the data is **not representative of exposure**. These results would be corrected for distance to the nearest receptor before comparison with objective levels.

Site Name	2021 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
Alphington Cross	25.6	22.5	23.8	22.9	23.5
Alphington Road inbound	27.4	24.3	24.5	23.6	23.3
Alphington Road outbound	21.2	20.6	18.4	17.2	19.8
Alphington Road outer*	20.6	18.7	18.1	16.5	18.9
Alphington Street	35.7	33.1	34.3	31.5	31.0
Archibald Road	16.8	15.2	15.7	14.3	14.1
Beacon Heath*	15.1	13.6	14.6	12.8	14.3
Blackboy Road (Polsloe Road)	23.5	20.6	21.0	21.8	22.4
Bonhay Road (St Clements Lane)	24.7	21.8	22.6	22.8	23.8
Bonhay Road bridge	-	26.9	27.1	26.6	26.3
Bridge Road (Countess Wear)	16.9	15.6	15.0	13.8	14.9

Site Name	2021 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
Carder's Court, Shilhay	18.3	15.7	15.9	16.1	15.9
Chudleigh Road	13.7	12.6	12.3	12.1	12.4
Church Road Alphington	24.3	18.5	17.8	17.2	19.9
Church Road II	19.8	20.9	22.1	20.1	19.7
Cowick Barton Playing Fields	9.3	8.9	8.3	7.2	9.4
Cowick Street (Cowick Lane)	31.6	30.1	31.2	29.9	28.2
Cowick Street (Exe Bridges)	28.2	26.7	27.5	26.5	25.3
Cowick Street (inbound)	19.9	17.5	18.1	17.1	19.5
Cowick Street (outbound)	29.8	28.7	29.2	28.1	28.8
Cowley Bridge Road	27.5	26.5	25.9	24.2	24.6
East John Walk	11.6	10.4	9.7	9.6	11.7
East Wonford Hill	42.2	40.4	40.5	38.1	34.2
Exeter Road	16.4	16.6	16.6	15.2	14.5
Exwick Playing Fields	15.9	13.9	12.7	15.1	15.2

Site Name	2021 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
Fore Street Heavitree inbound	32.2	30.5	30.6	28.5	27.7
Fore Street Heavitree outbound*	23.4	20.7	20.9	19.9	20.8
Heavitree Pleasure Grounds	9.1	8.7	7.8	7.2	8.3
Heavitree Road inbound	16.5	14.6	14.5	14.0	15.6
Heavitree Road outbound	28.0	24.0	25.8	23.8	24.6
High Street /Castle Street*	20.9	15.7	17.5	18.1	17.6
High Street Guildhall	20.4	18.1	18.3	19.6	20.2
High Street Topsham	22.1	18.7	18.7	17.7	18.6
Holloway Street	26.6	21.9	21.5	23.5	23.0
Honiton Road façade	16.0	14.9	14.9	13.7	15.8
Honiton Road*	35.4	31.7	33.5	32.2	29.4
Ladysmith School/Pretoria Road	12.2	10.5	10.9	9.7	11.8
Langaton Lane*	15.1	12.7	13.1	10.8	12.5
Livery Dole	34.9	32.3	34.7	32.0	27.6
Longbrook Street	21.4	19.0	20.0	18.9	17.3

Site Name	2021 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
Lower Coombe Street	18.6	15.4	16.5	17.0	19.1
Magdalen Road (Barrack Road)	29.4	27.6	27.9	26.4	26.2
Magdalen Street façade	23.8	22.9	18.7	18.6	19.4
Magdalen Street*	24.7	22.5	22.0	21.0	20.9
Market Street	23.4	20.7	20.1	19.7	19.9
Mill Lane	12.3	11.3	11.5	11.0	12.7
New Bridge Street	24.0	22.5	22.7	21.8	23.6
New North Road	22.6	20.1	19.6	19.0	18.8
Newcourt Way*	14.7	13.6	13.5	12.6	13.6
Newtown	12.6	12.0	11.9	11.3	11.8
North Street	27.9	24.0	23.9	28.8	26.0
Northernhay Gardens	10.7	8.4	9.4	-	-
Okehampton Street	20.6	18.7	19.0	18.6	19.6
Pennsylvania	8.3	7.8	7.6	7.2	16.2
Pennsylvania Road	23.2	21.6	21.5	20.5	13.5
Pinhoe Road (Fairfield Avenue)	15.8	15.9	13.7	13.8	14.3

Site Name	2021 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
Pinhoe Road (Polsloe Road)	30.6	28.0	29.6	28.6	30.6
Pinhoe Road inbound	24.0	22.3	23.5	22.3	25.0
Pinhoe*	21.8	18.6	20.5	19.1	17.3
Pinn Lane*	15.5	14.3	16.2	-	-
Queen Street	19.0	16.6	17.4	16.1	16.3
Queen's Road	11.7	10.1	9.9	9.7	13.2
RAMM 1 & 2	21.3	17.8	17.3	17.9	17.8
RAMM continuous analyser	19.2	17.9	16.4	17.1	17.4
Rear of Gervase Avenue*	19.2	17.5	17.6	17.5	20.8
Red Cow II	26.0	23.1	24.2	23.1	23.8
Red Cow Village	32.1	29.7	31.7	27.1	28.6
Riverside Valley Park	11.7	9.9	10.3	10.1	9.4
Rowancroft	32.1	27.2	28.6	27.1	26.1
Salutory Mount*	37.3	33.5	32.2	31.4	29.6
Sidmouth Road lamp post*	26.8	25.0	24.7	23.6	22.8
Sidmouth Road Middlemoor	19.2	17.5	17.5	16.6	22.0
Sidwell Street	23.8	20.5	21.6	22.5	25.3
South Gate	-	-	-	22.4	22.1

Site Name	2021 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2022 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2023 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2024 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)	2025 NO ₂ Annual Average Concentration (µg/m ³)
South Street*	24.2	20.6	20.2	20.5	20.1
St. Leonards Road	13.9	12.2	11.9	11.1	12.9
Station Road	21.2	20.3	20.7	19.6	19.8
Station Road Pinhoe	13.4	12.5	13.5	12.1	13.0
Tithebarn Link Road	17.3	15.4	15.8	15.2	16.3
Topsham Road (Barrack Road)	19.1	19.2	18.3	17.2	17.4
Topsham Road (Countess Wear)	20.7	17.4	19.1	17.7	17.4
Topsham Road (Tollards Road)	30.0	27.9	28.8	27.5	26.6
Union Road	21.0	19.3	18.7	17.7	19.7
Venny Bridge*	16.6	15.3	15.2	15.6	16.6
Western Way (Acorn)	-	-	-	28.0	26.5
York Road School*	23.0	20.7	20.3	19.0	19.8
York Road*	31.2	27.8	26.9	25.2	25.0