

Advice Note

Complaints of Petroleum Type Odours in Bramley



Why can I smell a strong odour?

The odour threshold of petroleum products is very low. That means people can smell petroleum type odours in the air at very low concentrations.

Outdoors, odours quickly disperse in the air whilst inside properties and confined spaces, odours appear stronger unless there is sufficient/good ventilation.

Is the odour at dangerous levels?

The Petroleum Enforcement Authority (Trading Standards) and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have been out a number of times in response to odour complaints over the past year. Monitoring has shown the levels of petroleum products in the air both outside and inside properties have been significantly below any explosive levels. The Fire Officer advises that they have never been concerned about any explosive or fire risks that would warrant any actions. Any action that has been taken would have been as a precautionary measure before they arrived on site.

Is the odour impacting my health?

Waverley Borough Council monitored odour in the cellar of a property in Bramley over a 4-week period from 18 April to 17 May 2023. This was in response to complaints of very strong odours there. The results showed levels of hydrocarbons from petroleum products were low and presented a minimal risk to health. The UK Health Security Agency advised:

- *Benzene was estimated to be present at an air concentration of approximately 0.2 µg/m³. The estimated concentration is below the UK National Air Quality Objective concentration of 5 µg/m³ and very close to the World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidance concentration of 0.17 µg/m³ with an estimated excess lifetime cancer risk of 1:1,000,000 (one in one million). This indicates that there is a minimal risk to health.*
- *All other hydrocarbons were detected at concentrations that are unlikely to present a risk to health.*

Odours outside are likely to be lower than the levels monitored inside as odours quickly disperse in the air.

What should I do if I have odours inside my property?

If anyone is ever concerned about petroleum type odours inside a property, they should open the windows and doors to ventilate the property. They can also contact the Petroleum Enforcement Authority (Trading Standards) and Environmental Health at Waverley Borough Council so they can investigate.

The Petroleum Enforcement Authority (Trading Standards) - telephone number 0300 123 2329
Environmental Health at Waverley Borough Council – 01483 523393

If you think odours are so strong that they might be at dangerous levels, you should contact the Fire Service to deal with this as an emergency. If you think odours are impacting your health, you should visit your GP or call NHS 111 and notify Environmental Health at Waverley Borough Council.