

Air Quality Management Areas - Frequently Asked Questions

The Borough of Poole have put together some further information that we hope will answer any questions or concerns regarding the Air Quality Management Areas you may have.

1. What are the implications of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)?

An AQMA means that, within that area, the levels of a certain pollutant are above those required by legislation for health reasons. Any declaration, in summary, means that further monitoring of that pollutant has to be undertaken and a plan has to be put in place to improve the air quality within it. Therefore the implications of an AQMA are all to encourage positive steps.

2. How many AQMAs are there within the Borough of Poole?

There are two AQMAs within the Borough of Poole: namely Commercial Road (between the Station Road and Curzon Road junctions), and also Ashley Road (between the Richmond Road and Mansfield Road junctions). However, many other neighbouring councils also have Air Quality Management Areas.

3. Is this a regular problem around the country?

Since the introduction of the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 local authorities are required to monitor and report air quality and declare an Air Quality Management Area where appropriate. Approximately 220 local authorities have declared at least one Air Quality Management Area. Some, such as the London Boroughs, have declared their whole boroughs as Air Quality Management Areas.

4. What is being done to tackle the problem?

The Borough of Poole are currently looking at transportation measures in both areas that will reduce congestion and increase the average vehicle speed along both of these stretches of road which in turn will have a beneficial effect on air quality. These measures will be reported within each of the Air Quality Action Plans. We are furthermore undertaking all the correct procedures required of us by DEFRA (Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs).

5. What do we do to monitor the problem?

The Borough of Poole have employed specialist consultants to monitor air quality within each area – using high-tech real time monitoring equipment. We have also used small monitoring tubes to obtain levels directly outside commercial and residential units. This data and information supplied by transportation services in relation to traffic is used to undertake a full Detailed Assessment of nitrogen dioxide within these areas.

6. I suffer from asthma. How will this affect me?

Certain sensitive individual who are more susceptible to respiratory pollution may feel the effects either more acutely or at lower levels. These individuals include those who suffer from heart disease, asthma and bronchitis, especially in young children and the elderly. The Health Protection Agency have advised that if you are in this risk category it is advisable to avoid prolonged exposure during periods of peak traffic.

7. Will this increase my chance of suffering from asthma?

For most people, pollution levels in the UK are unlikely to cause any serious health effects. During particularly severe pollution episodes, short term effects such as coughing and eye irritation may be triggered. The levels measured within Commercial Road however are not considered as 'severe', and the levels are likely to go unnoticed by most people.

8. I work in the area, how will this affect my health?

The criteria used to assess the levels of nitrogen dioxide are based on a long term exposure limit of where members of the public might be regularly exposed for long periods, e.g. residential properties, schools, hospitals. It is thought that the workplace is not considered as long term exposure. Research undertaken by DEFRA identified that exceedence of the shorter term objectives were considered unlikely where the annual mean is below $60\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (Commercial Road and Ashley Road levels are below $60\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).

9. Is it safe to allow my children to play in the garden?

Yes of course. There are only residential flats within the specific area of both the AQMAs, therefore no gardens are included within the area of the higher nitrogen dioxide levels, these levels are only very close to the main road where traffic is sometimes queued.

Furthermore, they are based on exposure to nitrogen dioxide for far longer periods of time than it is considered for children playing in their gardens.

10. What are the implications for property values?

The designation of an AQMA is a legislative requirement and is not an optional process. AQMAs are not subject to land searches and many other councils have declared AQMAs and to the best of our knowledge there have been no reported effects on property values.