
Crowthorne Air Quality Action Plan and Air Quality Management Area Revocations Update

Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	11 March 2024
Chair of Committee:	Councillor Lee Dillon
Date JMB agreed report:	26 February 2024
Report Author:	Suzanne McLaughlin
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC4485

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) for the revised Crowthorne Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) following the statutory consultation.
- 1.2 To seek approval from the JPPC for the revocation of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Bracknell (A322 Downshire Way), Newbury (A339) and Thatcham (A4) having considered of the consultation process instigated by the Committee on the 11th December 2023.

2. Recommendations

The Committee:

- 2.1 **APPROVES** the Crowthorne AQAP, as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 **RESOLVES** that the Air Quality Management areas for Bracknell (A322 Downshire Way), Newbury (A339) and Thatcham (A4) be revoked.

3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>Work relating to Air Quality monitoring and reporting is funded from the general revenue budget allocated to the Public Protection Service. Several proposals in the action plans continue to require additional funding to implement whilst others are relatively low cost and are covered from within the PPP revenue budget.</p> <p>Grant funding from DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) has been available and the PPP have applied annually. In addition, West Berkshire Council (on behalf of the Partnership) was awarded £259,406 in March 2021 by DEFRA to fund a project focused on behavioural change for the residents who drive in the three boroughs by launching an anti-idling campaign as well as PM2.5 monitoring in / near the Air Quality Management Areas.</p>

<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>Staff who undertake this work are a shared resource with Wokingham Borough Council under the new Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) with Wokingham.</p> <p>One benefit of the shared service is the ability to have staff that specialise in areas such as this and the service is fortunate to have several officers with significant expertise on environmental matters generally and air quality specifically.</p> <p>The 2021/22 Grant from DEFRA has meant that the authority was able to appoint an Air Quality Officer on a fixed term contract until September 2023 to support the anti-idling campaign. The post holder left WBC in April 2023 and since then the work has been undertaken in PPP and recharged to the grant.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>Under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system local authorities are legally required to assess air quality in their area and designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) if improvements are necessary.</p> <p>Where an AQMA is designated, of which there are two in Bracknell Forest (Crowthorne and Downshire Way, Bracknell) and two in West Berkshire (Newbury A339 and Thatcham A4), local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) describing the pollution reduction measures it will put in place.</p> <p>Where the pollutant levels no longer exceed the Objectives then the AQMAs should be revoked by Order. Where a Local Authority no longer has any AQMAs then an Air Quality Strategy is to be produced. Where a Local Authority still has an AQMA these are to be regularly reviewed and must be revised no later than every five years.</p> <p>PPP Officers have worked with the WBC and BFC Legal Services Teams to progress the Order.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>This is a legal requirement under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Failure to comply with our statutory obligations could present the risk of challenge to the PPP partner authorities.</p>
<p>Property:</p>	<p>There are no direct property implications arising from this report.</p>
<p>Policy:</p>	<p>The Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) identified Environmental Protection as one of the six Overarching Themes for the Joint Public Protection Committee.</p> <p>Under this heading the Committee in turn identified Improving Air Quality as a priority for 2023/24. West Berkshire has declared a climate emergency. They have embedded Air Quality</p>

	improvements into their Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plans.		
	Bracknell Forest Council's Climate Change Strategy was completed and published in January 2021 and have a target of net carbon zero by 2050.		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
	Commentary		
Equalities Impact:			
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x	Consideration of the impact on inequality is set out in the report and reflected on in the National Clean Air Strategy. Any inequalities raised as part of the consultation have been addressed in the AQAPs and AQMAs.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x	Poor air quality can be particularly harmful to the young, elderly, pregnant and those suffering ill health. Consideration to all these matters is given in this report and / or the National Clean Air Strategy.
Environmental Impact:	x		Under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system local authorities are legally required to assess air quality in their area and designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) if improvements are necessary. Where an AQMA is designated, local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) describing the pollution reduction measures it will put in place. These reports are therefore designed to have a positive impact on the environment.
Health Impact:	x		The Air Quality Objectives have been put in place to protect people's health and the environment.

			<p>Although there has been a reduction in air pollution since the 1970s, poor air quality is still the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. It shortens lives and reduces quality of life, particularly amongst the most vulnerable, the young and old, and those living with health conditions.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and where appropriate the creation of action plans or strategies is designed to improve the quality of lives of our residents.</p>
ICT or Digital Services Impact:		x	<p>None</p> <p>All Reports and Plans are published on the PPP website.</p>
PPP Priorities :			<p>The report will impact on the following PPP Priorities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Protection 2. Improved Air Quality
Data Impact:		x	None
Consultation and Engagement:	Consultation with all statutory consultees and other interested parties has taken place for the Crowthorne AQAP update and AQMA revocations.		
Other Options Considered:	None – The update of the AQAP is a requirement by DEFRA and revocations are required when Air Quality Objective levels are no longer exceeded over the three-year period.		

4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 Following the [report to the last Committee](#) in December 2023 the statutory consultation has taken place for the Crowthorne AQAP. The responses received have been reviewed and an updated Plan finalised, as set out in Appendix A.
- 4.2 The revocation of the Bracknell, Newbury and Thatcham AQMAs are progressing following consultation, as shown in Appendices B and C.

5. Bracknell Forest

- 5.1 Following submission of the Annual Status Report 2023 (for monitoring data 2022) to DEFRA their corresponding appraisal recommended that the Bracknell AQMA (the A322 Bagshot Road and Downshire Way from Berkshire Way to the junction with the B3430) be revoked.
- 5.2 It also stated that the Crowthorne AQMA (Bracknell Road B3348 and High Street) should remain in place due to there not being three years of Nitrogen Dioxide monitored data below 10% of the Objective level recorded. DEFRA also commented that the AQAP for Crowthorne required updating.

- 5.3 Officers subsequently updated the Crowthorne AQAP and the draft document was then subjected to a statutory consultation. The consultation ran from the 20 December 2023 to the 31 January 2024. In accordance with the legislative framework DEFRA, the Environment Agency, National Highways, all local authorities neighbouring BFC, other public authorities as appropriate, and bodies representing local business interests and other organisations as appropriate, such as internal public health, planning policy and transport colleagues, and town / Parish councils were consulted.
- 5.4 The statutory consultation received six responses:
- 5.5 National Highways – welcomed the proposal to improve Dukes Ride / Bracknell Road junction and initiatives to shift from car use.
- 5.6 Crowthorne Parish Council – welcomed measure to reduce queuing such as a freight quality partnership for deliveries and a left filter into the High Street.
- 5.7 Crowthorne Village Action Group (CVAG) – stated that the impact on air quality by planned housing growth in Crowthorne in the Local Plan needed to be acknowledged; and sought to encourage increases in public transport provision.
- 5.8 BFC Development and Planning and Climate Change and Sustainable Living Teams – requested some specific updates to some BFC documents and plans.
- 5.9 BFC Corporate Management Team – requested an additional measure regarding a feasibility study into High Street closures.
- 5.10 In addition DEFRA acknowledged receipt of the draft and any comments are awaited.
- 5.11 Once adopted the final Plan will be reported to DEFRA and published on BFC and PPP websites.
- 5.12 The Bracknell AQMA draft revocation report for consultation was agreed by the Joint Public Protection Committee at the meeting on the 11 December 2023. The revocation consultation process was carried out between the 13 December 2023 and the 19 January 2024. Again DEFRA, the Environment Agency, National Highways, all local authorities neighbouring BFC, other public authorities as appropriate, and bodies representing local business interests and other organisations as appropriate, such as internal public health, planning policy and transport colleagues, and town / Parish councils were consulted.
- 5.13 One consultation response was received. This was from the Highways and Transport Team which provided some additional justification regarding highway improvements on the AQMA A322 corridor.

6. West Berkshire

- 6.1 Following submission of the Annual Status Report 2023 (for monitoring data 2022) the corresponding appraisal from DEFRA recommended that the two AQMAs declared (Thatcham (on the A4) and Newbury (A339, St John's Roundabout) both be revoked.
- 6.2 The Newbury and Thatcham AQMAs draft revocation report for consultation was agreed by the Joint Public Protection Committee at the meeting held on the 11 December 2023. The revocation consultation process was carried between the 13 December 2023 and the 19 January 2024.

- 6.3 Officers consulted with DEFRA, the Environment Agency, National Highways, all local authorities neighbouring WBC, other public authorities as appropriate, and bodies representing local business interests and other organisations as appropriate, such as internal public health, planning policy and transport colleagues, and town / parish councils.
- 6.4 One consultation response was received. Thatcham Town Council felt the revocation was premature. The response has been acknowledged and responded to as follows:
- The number of years of data used to recommend revocation with the impact of the two Covid-19 (2020 and 2021) years was considered in the revocation process.
 - Officers clarified that an Air Quality Strategy was not required as an Air Quality Action Plan was in place.
 - Officers took into consideration the cumulative impact of traffic due to planning applications for industrial developments in Thatcham and Theale as well as the Draft Local Plan's consideration of the impact on air quality by future developments in proposing revocation.
- 6.5 In addition, Defra were also of the view the Order should be revoked.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 Officers will now publish the AQAP for Crowthorne, as set out in Appendix A, on the PPP and BFC websites. It will also be uploaded on the DEFRA air quality portal. The Bracknell Forest Council Officer Working Group meets regularly to progress actions, and progress will be reported to DEFRA via the Annual Status Reports.
- 7.2 For the Bracknell, Newbury, and Thatcham AQMAs the final Revocation Order for approval of intention must be sealed and sent to DEFRA and as is required will be published on the each of the Councils and the PPP websites.
- 7.3 The West Berkshire Air Quality Strategy must now be development and a publication will be produced in consultation with the Director of Public Health. The Strategy must set out and progress the steps the local authority will take to improve air quality in their area.

8. Concluding Observations

- 8.1 The improvements to Air Quality, and hence the requirement to revoke the AQMAs, across the three local authority areas are to be welcomed. There are many factors that have contributed to this and it is clear that the range of interventions made by each Council has contributed to this improvement.
- 8.2 Air Quality continues to be a high-profile area of work and the links with the sources of pollutants and health impacts have become more apparent during and after the Covid pandemic. We are not complacent and the authorities will continue to monitor the levels of pollutants and ensure that we continue to progress actions set out within the action plans.

- 8.3 The duty on local authorities to both assess and improve air quality is not just a legal requirement but a public demand. The effects on health of poor air quality are indisputable and councils have been given a range of tools to tackle the causes.
- 8.4 In simple terms the causes are known but the solutions are wide ranging. The proposals set out in the plans seek to address several approaches ranging from raising awareness, changing human behaviour and improving infrastructure.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Crowthorne Air Quality Action Plan

Appendix B - Bracknell Town Revocation Report, as updated

Appendix C - Newbury and Thatcham Revocation Report, as updated

10. Background Papers:

11 December 2023 JPPC report item 7 [West Berkshire Council - Agenda for Joint Public Protection Committee on Monday, 11th December, 2023, 7.00 pm](#)

Bracknell Forest Council's LTP3 and supporting documents which can be accessed via the Council's website, at: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planningpolicy/transport-policy>

West Berkshire Council's LTP3 and supporting documents which can be accessed via the Council's website, at: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/ltp>

Defra: National Clean Air Strategy 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019>

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: All Wards or State Specific Wards

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