



**Cheshire West
and Chester**

Air Quality Management Area

Chester City Centre

Consultation Document

21 March 2017

Chester Air Quality Management Area consultation

Cheshire West and Chester Council has been monitoring air pollution levels in and around Chester city centre for a number of years. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) already exists around the Boughton gyratory. The Council has recently completed an in-depth assessment of air pollution around the inner ring road and city centre to determine whether nitrogen dioxide levels comply with the UK's Air Quality Standards.

The Air Quality Standards set concentration limits for certain pollutants over a period of time which are protective of health. There are two such standards for nitrogen dioxide:

1. The hourly average.
2. The annual average.

The assessment confirmed that whilst the hourly average is being met, the annual average, similar to many towns and cities in England, is being exceeded at a number of points around the inner ring road. The main cause of the problem is traffic accessing the city centre.

Intervention is required to ensure nitrogen dioxide emissions from traffic are reduced as quickly as reasonably possible to an acceptable level. To address this issue, Cheshire West and Chester Council has a statutory duty to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Declaring an AQMA is the first step towards tackling the issue. The attached map shows the extent, in purple, of the proposed Air Quality Management Area.

We would like to find out your views on the proposed air quality management area.

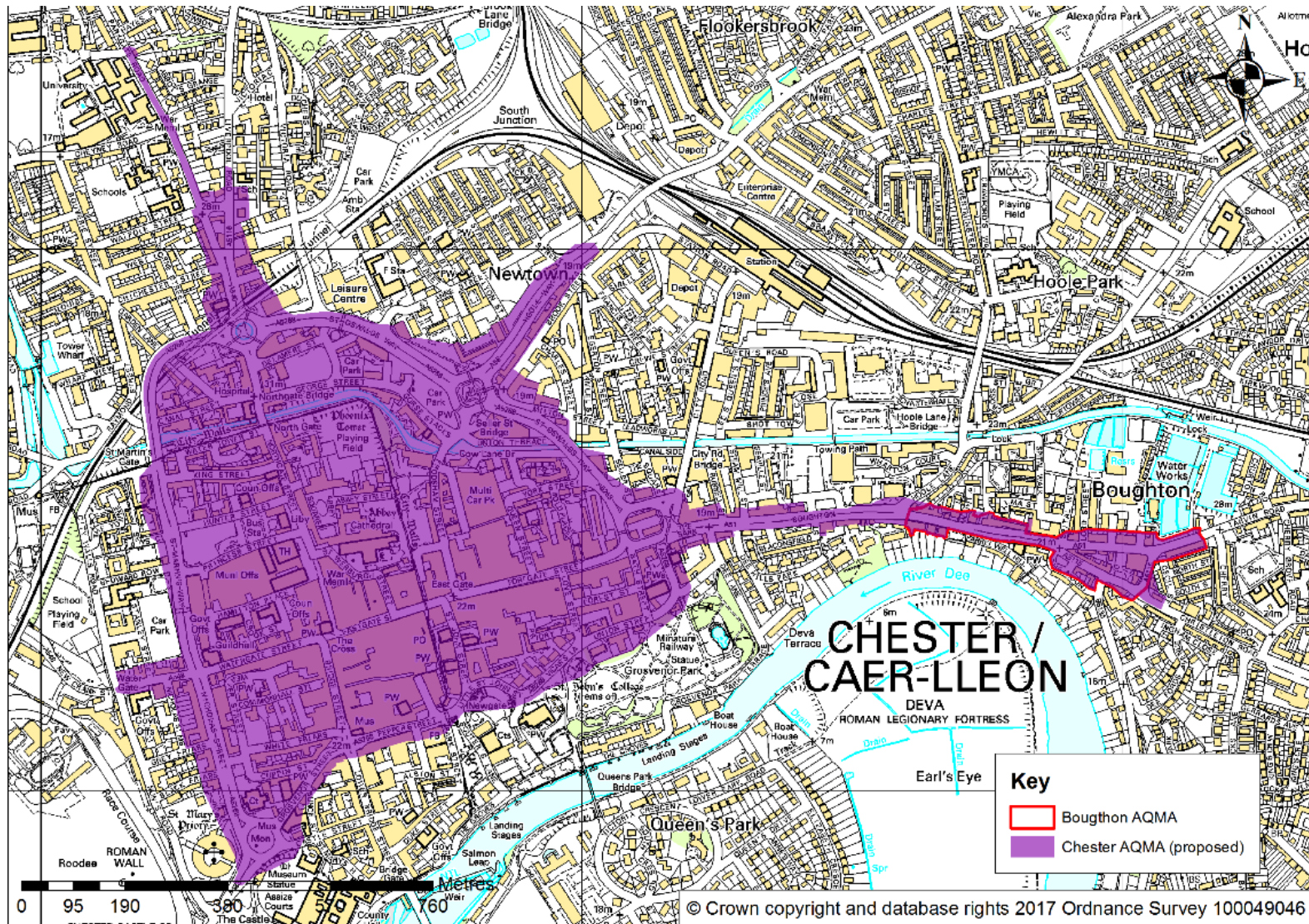
Once the AQMA has been declared, Cheshire West and Chester Council must develop an Action Plan setting out how the Council and other agencies will work towards achieving the Air Quality Objective. This action plan presents a real opportunity to improve local air quality and we will consult further on this over the course of the next 12 months.

A number of actions are already underway to help improve air quality in Chester. These include lower emissions on the Park & Ride bus service, retrofitting exhaust control technology on commercial bus services, inclusion of electric vehicle charging requirements in planning policy and the development of a Low Emissions Strategy which will be completed this year. This is a good start but we recognise more must be done.

It is our intention to formally declare the Air Quality Management Area by the end of April 2017. If you wish to provide any comments in response to this consultation then they must be submitted in writing by the **17 April 2017**. Comments can be submitted either by email to environmentalprotection@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or by post to Cheshire West & Chester Borough Council, Environmental Protection, Wyvern House, The Drummer, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 1AH.

A frequently asked question section can be found below but if you have any further questions or wish to discuss any issues raised in this letter then please do not hesitate to contact the Environmental Protection Team on 0300 123 7038 or by email environmentalprotection@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

Proposed Air Quality Management Area



Map showing the extent of the existing and proposed AQMA in Chester city centre.



Cheshire West and Chester

Frequently asked question for residents and businesses.

What is Local Air Quality Management?

The UK Government has set Air Quality Standards for a number of pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter. These Standards are based on human health risk assessments and are set at levels below which there should be no detrimental effect on human health in the main population.

Local Authorities are required to undertake regular reviews and assessments of air quality in their areas to see whether any Standards are exceeded and report their findings to the Government annually. This report is called the Annual Status Reports (ASR). All ASR's must follow a standard template and provide details on progress implementing action plans (agreed air quality improvement measures), summaries of air quality monitoring undertaken; and reports on significant new developments that may affect local air quality. The ASR 2016 is published on the Council website and can be found here.

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/pests-pollution-food-safety/pollution-and-air-quality/air-quality-review-and-assessm.aspx>.

It provides information on monitoring locations and results around the Borough including Chester city centre. The ASR 2017 will be completed by June 2017 and published on the council website.

A related report entitled "Detailed assessment for Chester city centre 2016" is also available for viewing following the above link. This report recommends that based on the identification of elevated nitrogen dioxide levels, the council should declare an Air Quality Management Area around the inner ring road.

What is an Air Quality Management Area?

An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is an area which has been subject to an air quality assessment and the local authority can conclude with reasonable certainty that one or more of the Air Quality Standards are likely to be exceeded. In this case the annual mean for nitrogen dioxide will be exceeded at a number of locations. In these areas, it is a statutory duty for the Local Authority to declare an AQMA.

Once declared the council is required to produce an Action Plan within 12 months setting out measures to reduce pollutant levels. Work will begin on this in due course but first we must make the declaration.

Monitoring of levels continue until such a time when the levels meet the required standard and the council is satisfied that the reduction is permanent.

Where do the Air Quality Objectives come from?

The Air Quality Standards are set out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2007 and mirror the European Directive's Limit Values for these pollutants.

The Government has also adopted a National Air Quality Strategy which includes the UK Air Quality Objectives. One of the main aims of the Air Quality Strategy is to provide the best practicable protection to human health and the environment by setting evidence based objectives for the main air pollutants.

Where does nitrogen dioxide come from?

All fossil fuel combustion such as car engines and boilers directly produce some nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), the vast majority however is produced indirectly through the release of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) some of which very quickly convert to nitrogen dioxide.

Many factors will combine to affect NO₂ levels in a particular area; the topography, weather patterns, numbers and types of vehicles and congestion patterns. The other main factor is the distance you live from the source (the road). Nitrogen dioxide levels reduce considerably with distance from the kerb so properties with front gardens will enjoy lower NO₂ levels than those that are immediately next to the pavement.

Different vehicles produce different amounts of NO_x. Larger vehicles, older vehicles and diesel vehicles produce more NO_x than new petrol vehicles. New vehicles are 'cleaner' due to new technology such as catalytic converters and particulate filters. Electric vehicles do not release any NO_x or NO₂.

Is Cheshire West and Chester the only place to have an AQMA?

No, Local Authorities in the UK have declared over 700 AQMAs, the majority of which are declared because of high levels of NO₂ as a result of road transport. Within Cheshire West and Chester there are already three AQMAs which were declared due to high levels of NO₂. These are located in the Boughton area of Chester, the Fluin Lane area of Frodsham and the Whitby Road area of Ellesmere Port.

Declaring an AQMA will not make the air quality any worse. In fact it is recognition by the Council that a problem exists, and is the first stage in a process of working towards better air quality. As such it should be viewed positively because it means work must begin to improve local air quality.

I live in this area: is air quality getting worse?

Air pollution from all sources has tended to decrease over the past two decades, and emissions of key pollutants from road transport have fallen by about 50% over the last 10 years, and are expected to reduce further. This is despite the increase in traffic on some routes. However, this is an average, and monitoring results are not declining near some busy roads, due to increased congestion and the increase in diesel cars.

Will the air pollution affect me and my family?

The air quality standards have been set with health effects in mind. They have been specified at levels below which there are believed to be no measurable health effects in the main population. If your health is good, the air pollution we experience in the borough is unlikely to have any short-term health effects. However people with pre-existing lung or heart conditions, asthma or other bronchial conditions are more likely to be affected by elevated levels of outdoor air pollution.

Nitrogen dioxide can have both short-term and long-term health effects. The short-term effects include irritation of the eyes, nose and throat and can increase the symptoms of existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis or emphysema.

The long-term effects are associated with a gradual deterioration in health of people who are already suffering from respiratory problems, and an increased susceptibility to respiratory infections amongst healthy individuals. If you have any specific problems you should discuss these with your GP.

Air Quality information and forecasts for the region can be found on:

Freephone: 0800 556677

Web: <http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/forecasting/>

Will the air pollution affect my business?

We hope not, almost every major city and town centre in England has a similar air quality issue so it is not as if this is a unique issue that only affects Chester. Locally Liverpool, Manchester and Warrington all have town centre air quality management areas.

The health issues associated with the levels of nitrogen dioxide recorded relate to long term exposure rather than short term exposure that shoppers or employees may experience. The experience of other towns across the UK confirms that this seems to be the case. Where businesses may notice some impact is in the event of new development where more weight will be given to air quality considerations in the planning process.

I own property - will an Air Quality Management Area affect the value of my property?

The reasons why people choose a property are complex and, despite over 700 AQMA's in the UK, to our knowledge there has been no evidence published that shows that this issue will affect the value of your property.

So what are we doing about it?

Once an AQMA is declared, the Council is obliged to produce an Air Quality Action Plan which is specific to a particular AQMA. The Action Plan will be completed within 12 months following declaration of the AQMA and will set out how the Council and key partner agencies will work towards reducing NO₂ levels. We will consult further as part of this process.

In reality we are already taking steps to improve air quality such as the introduction of cleaner buses on our Park and Ride service, retrofitting exhaust control technology on commercial bus services in Chester; inclusion of electric vehicle charging requirements in planning policy and development of a Low Emissions Strategy, which will be completed this summer. However we need to do more and we need to ensure new development within and around the city centre helps reduce pollution rather than adding to it.

What will the Action Plan look like?

The cause of the issue is vehicle emissions and so measures will be focused on reducing emissions, reducing congestion at key locations and promoting low emission vehicle technology.

Will I get the opportunity to have my say on the Action Plan?

Yes we will consult with local residents, businesses and other interested parties as part of the action plan delivery process. If you would like to provide an email address we will add it to a confidential database specifically for this purpose, it will not be provided to any other party for any other reason. Please send contact details to the email address at the bottom of this FAQ.

How long will the AQMA last?

The Council will continually review air quality within the AQMA. If we can be reasonably certain that the NO₂ Air Quality Standard will be achieved, then the Council can amend or even revoke the AQMA. However, it should be noted that Action Plans typically span a number of years and we would not expect to be able to resolve the matter in a few months. The Action Plan will consider the relevant timeframes in much greater detail.

Can I have monitoring undertaken at my premise/house?

There are a large number of properties within the AQMA and it would neither be affordable or practicable for us to monitor at every location. Instead we rely on a computer model combined with numerous monitors for verification, to inform us of NO₂ levels at any given location. The existing monitoring locations can be found on the air quality section of our website and provide extensive coverage of the area. These locations are subject to review every 12 months. The link above to the Annual Status Report 2016 shows you our monitoring locations in the area on page 39.

Where can I get more information?

National information on Air Quality can be found on the internet at:

<http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/air-pollution/>

All our air quality reports can be downloaded from:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/pests-pollution-food-safety/pollution-and-air-quality/air-quality-review-and-assessm.aspx>.

If you have any comments, suggestions or would like to ask more questions, please contact:

The Environmental Protection Team
Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council
Wyvern House
The Drummer
Winsford
Cheshire

Telephone us on 0300 123 7038

E-mail environmentalprotection@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk