

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

Policy DM8

Air Quality

Development will be required to maintain, and where possible, improve air quality and reduce exposure to areas of poor air quality. Development will be supported where it does not lead to adverse effects on health or the environment either from the development itself or cumulatively.

Taking account of the end-use and nature of the area and application, the proposal should demonstrate that the development satisfies the following criteria:

- a. It has no adverse effect on air quality in an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA);
- b. It will not lead to the declaration of a new AQMA;
- c. It will not interfere with the implementation of current Air Quality Action Plans (AQAP);
- d. It is not in proximity to a source of air pollution which could present a significant risk to human health;
- e. It does not expose occupiers who are particularly sensitive to air pollution, such as those in schools, health care establishments or housing for older people;
- f. It is not in proximity to a source of air pollution which could present a likely significant effect/ risk on/to the qualifying features of a site designated for its wildlife habitat and species importance;
- g. It will minimise the impact on air quality, both during the construction process and lifetime of the completed development; and
- h. It provides opportunities to improve air quality, reduce airborne emissions, and where necessary mitigates impacts, including measures such as the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure, active travel, and other traffic and travel management.

An Air Quality Assessment (AQA) carried out in accordance with the relevant national standards and guidance will be required by the Council where development proposals meet one of the following criteria:

- i. The development has the potential to impact on air quality within an AQMA, either on its own or having regard to cumulative planned developments;
- ii. The development has the potential to impact on air quality where there are concerns that an air quality objective might be exceeded, either on its own or having regard to cumulative planned developments;
- iii. The development involves more than 100 parking spaces outside an AQMA, or 50 parking spaces within or close to an AQMA;
- iv. The development has the potential to increase heavy goods vehicle movements on a busy (greater than 10,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) movements) or congested road near to sensitive receptors;
- v. Development involving larger scale energy/heating plant with the potential to impact on sensitive receptors e.g. solid fuel plant and short term operating reserve sites; or
- vi. Development introducing a new sensitive receptor within an AQMA or in close proximity to an AQMA.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment, will be required by the Council to establish whether a development could present a likely significant effect/ risk on/to the qualifying features of a site designated for its international importance for biodiversity.

Supporting Text

10.78 Air quality is the largest environmental health risk in the UK. It shortens lives and contributes to chronic illness. Health can be affected both by short-term, high-pollution episodes and by long-term exposure to lower levels of pollution (*Source: Clean Air Strategy 2019*). Air pollution has direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment, contributing to climate change and affecting habitats and species, through plant take up and nitrogen and acid deposits on the ground and water sources.

10.79 West Berkshire Council is a member of the Public Protection Partnership with Bracknell Forest and Wokingham where data and information about air quality in these parts of Berkshire is pooled and shared. The Policy Guidance: Planning for Air Quality (including Good Design and Air Quality Assessments) being prepared by the Partnership will set the requirements for the consideration of air quality in proposals for new development. National guidance has been produced by Environmental Protection UK and the Institute of Air Quality Management.

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10.80 Planning has an important influence on air quality and also, therefore, the health of humans and ecosystems. It can be used to locate development to reduce emissions overall and reduce the exposure of people to air pollution. Where necessary, appropriate mitigation measures will be required and these will vary on a case by case basis but can include simple measures designed into the scheme from the outset. The Council will utilise the Policy Guidance: Planning for Air Quality (including Good Design and Air Quality Assessments) prepared by the Public Protection Partnership to aid the assessment of applications, development proposals which incorporate good design principles to minimise emissions and impacts on air quality will be supported. Other mitigation measures may include incorporating active travel, traffic management or well-designed green infrastructure which can offer significant physical health benefits and equality via improved air quality, if planned and designed correctly, through reducing the public's exposure to pollutants. The aims of improving air quality and the natural environment in addition to reducing exposure to air pollution have been woven into the LPR to achieve sustainable development and applicants should have regard to the following policies SP5, SP7, SP10, SP11, SP19, DM3, DM4 and DM5. Proposed development allocations have been located where possible, to minimise the need to travel and promote sustainable modes of transport and the individual strategic and residential site allocation policies have regard to air quality.

10.81 The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and wherever possible enhance the natural and local environment. Specifically, planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for air pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas.