

Guidance

Air quality

Provides guidance on how planning can take account of the impact of new development on air quality.

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From: [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#)

What specific issues may need to be considered when assessing air quality impacts?

Considerations that may be relevant to determining a planning application include whether the development would:

- Lead to changes (including any potential reductions) in vehicle-related emissions in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development or further afield. This could be through the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure; altering the level of traffic congestion; significantly changing traffic volumes, vehicle speeds or both; or significantly altering the traffic composition on local roads. Other matters to consider include whether the proposal involves the development of a bus station, coach or lorry park; could add to turnover in a large car park; or involve construction sites that would generate large Heavy Goods Vehicle flows over a period of a year or more;
- Introduce new point sources of air pollution. This could include furnaces which require prior notification to local authorities; biomass boilers or biomass-fuelled Combined Heat and Power plant; centralised boilers or plant burning other fuels within or close to an air quality management area or introduce relevant combustion within a [Smoke Control Area](#); or extraction systems (including chimneys) which require approval or permits under pollution control legislation;
- Expose people to harmful concentrations of air pollutants, including dust. This could be by building new homes, schools, workplaces or other development in places with poor air quality;
- Give rise to potentially unacceptable impacts (such as dust) during construction for nearby sensitive locations;
- Have a potential adverse effect on biodiversity, especially where it would affect sites designated for their biodiversity value.

Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 32-006-20191101

Revision date: 01 11 2019

How detailed does an air quality assessment need to be?

Assessments need to be proportionate to the nature and scale of development proposed and the potential impacts (taking into account existing air quality conditions), and because of this are likely to be locationally specific. The scope and content of supporting information is best discussed and agreed between the local planning authority and applicant before it is commissioned.

It is not necessary for air quality assessments that support planning applications to duplicate aspects of air quality assessments that will be done as part of non-planning control regimes, such as under Environmental Permitting Regulations. Air quality is a consideration in [Environmental Impact Assessment](#), if one is required, and also in a [Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment](#).

The following could form part of assessments:

- a description of baseline conditions and any air quality concerns affecting the area, and how these could change both with and without the proposed development;
- sensitive habitats (including designated sites of importance for biodiversity);
- the assessment methods to be adopted and any requirements for the verification of modelling air quality;
- the basis for assessing impacts and determining the significance of an impact;
- where relevant, the cumulative or in-combination effects arising from several developments;
- construction phase impacts;
- acceptable mitigation measures to reduce or remove adverse effects; and
- measures that could deliver improved air quality even when legally binding limits for concentrations of major air pollutants are not being breached.

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How can an impact on air quality be mitigated?

Mitigation options will need to be locationally specific, will depend on the proposed development and need to be proportionate to the likely impact. It is important that local planning authorities work with applicants to consider appropriate mitigation so as to ensure new development is appropriate for its location and unacceptable risks are prevented. [Planning conditions](#) and [obligations](#) can be used to secure mitigation where the relevant tests are met.

Examples of mitigation include:

- maintaining adequate separation distances between sources of air pollution and receptors;
- using green infrastructure, in particular trees, where this can create a barrier or maintain separation between sources of pollution and receptors;
- appropriate means of filtration and ventilation;
- including infrastructure to promote modes of transport with a low impact on air quality (such as electric vehicle charging points);
- controlling dust and emissions from construction, operation and demolition; and
- contributing funding to measures, including those identified in air quality action plans and low emission strategies, designed to offset the impact on air quality arising from new development.

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