

12.0 Planning and Air Quality Policies

The land use planning system is recognised to play an integral part in improving air quality. This requires close co-operation between planners and environmental protection officers. This chapter of the report describes the Environmental Protection Unit's procedure to ensure the air quality impact of proposed new developments is adequately assessed. The chapter also considers and lists the air quality planning policies which determine City of York Council's approach to planning and air quality issues.

12.1 Assessment of planning applications by EPU

A list of recently submitted planning applications is received by the Environmental Protection Unit every week. This list of applications is inspected by officers working in the fields of air quality, contaminated land and noise. If it is felt that there may be implications for any of these areas of work, applications will be requested by officers for closer scrutiny.

Where planning permission is sought for a development inside or in the vicinity of an air quality management area (AQMA), greater weight may need to be given to air quality considerations. Similarly, air quality may be a material consideration where a development would give rise to emissions or increase traffic to such an extent that it would be necessary to designate an AQMA, or where it would conflict with any proposals within City of York Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

The Environmental Protection Unit welcomes developments which are likely to have a positive impact on air quality by supporting the objectives of the air quality action plan. For example, developments can help support public transport, walking or cycling and include commitments to energy-efficient buildings.

An example of the types of applications that would be scrutinised by City of York Council's air quality department include the following:

- Applications for developments likely to give rise to significant volumes of traffic such that a traffic impact assessment is deemed necessary. Also applications for developments within areas where there is already a recognised congestion problem.
- Applications for developments likely to require significant additional car parking spaces (300 or more spaces).
- Applications where coach and lorry parking is to be provided.
- Applications for residential developments incorporating low-level dwellings next to busy highways with opening windows.

- Applications for developments likely introduce 'relevant locations' into known areas of poor air quality.
- Applications which may lead to potential significant emissions to air from sources other than traffic

12.2 Planning applications currently awaiting decision

The purpose of this section of the report is to log any proposed new local developments so that they may be considered more thoroughly during the next full round of review and assessment. Progress reports provide the opportunity to log planning applications for new developments to give a picture of areas where changes make take place and where combined impacts from several developments may become important. The following text list the developments are currently under consideration (as of the end of Feb 2005) and provides a brief description of the proposals. A map of these developments is shown in Appendix 3.

- **A1237 Outer Ring Road Study** : Consultants have been appointed by City of York Council to undertake the A1237 York Outer Ring Road Study. The overall objectives of the study are to identify an appropriate strategy and package of measures for improving the A1237 Outer Ring Road. Since the overarching study is likely to contain a number of individual proposals which could have the potential to impact on air quality, it is anticipated that proposed improvements will be modelled in terms of their impact on traffic flows in the city centre, in addition to their localised impacts on the areas immediately adjacent to the Outer Ring Road. This study will also satisfy the requirement laid out in City of York Council's Air Quality Action Plan to undertake an investigation into improving the Outer Ring Road for the purpose of trying to reduce the number and distance of trips within the AQMA.
- **Hungate Development** : The Hungate area represents the largest remaining development opportunity within the city walls. It offers an opportunity for a major new mixed use scheme with high quality offices, residential, retail, leisure and community uses. The Hungate site lies adjacent to the Council's designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) which includes the Inner Ring Road (Foss Islands Road) at the end of Peaseholme Green. Current pollution monitoring by the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) indicates that the annual average nitrogen dioxide air quality objective is currently being exceeded in some locations on Stonebow and is unlikely to be met by the 2005 compliance year. As there are currently no 'relevant' locations at the exceedance points the area does not fall within the boundary of the current AQMA. To prevent the introduction of 'relevant locations' in this area and a subsequent need to extend the boundaries of the AQMA, it has been recommended that development along the Stonebow façade should, where possible, consist of non-residential uses such as offices. Where residential properties are to be introduced it has been suggested that they be designed in a manner that will minimise exposure of residents to

pollutants. As development of the Hungate site will impact upon local air quality, alternatives to the car must be researched and promoted within any scheme to develop this area. A detailed Air Quality Impact Assessment will be carried out for this development proposal using ADMS-Urban.

- **York Central** - The York Central site is located in the centre of the city to the west of the York rail station. It is a Brownfield site currently consisting mainly of railway uses, and comprises a site which provides the opportunity for a sustainable development adjacent to the city centre and rail station. A significant proportion of the city's forecast growth in employment and housing requirements could be accommodated at York Central, which will improve accessibility and sustainability within the city centre. There are approximately 30-35 hectares of Brownfield land available with the potential to accommodate 3,000 dwellings and more than 100,000 square metres of commercial space. In relation to York Central, it is essential that congestion and air quality within the AQMA is not worsened and that the development does not result in a need to extend the AQMA boundaries. In view of this a detailed assessment of the additional air pollution generated by the development will be needed, based on the Traffic Impact Assessment and the predicted increases in daily average traffic flow. Individual developments within the York Central area are unlikely to generate large amounts of additional traffic on their own. Separate air quality impact assessments for each individual development are therefore not appropriate as they will fail to demonstrate the cumulative impact of intense development over a relatively small area. An holistic approach to the air quality impact assessment must therefore be undertaken at an early stage in the process, based on the maximum number of vehicles predicted to be entering the York Central area as a whole on a daily basis. As well as the maximum number of vehicles accessing the site, the likely route to be taken into the site by these vehicles must also be fully understood before the air quality impact assessment is undertaken. A York Central project team has been established within CYC to ensure that these issues are addressed. Environmental Protection Officers are included in this team.
- **Castle Picadilly Development** – Castle Picadilly is an area on the southern side of the city within the city centre boundary. The proposed development site lies adjacent to a number of roads which form part of City of York Council's Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Due to the proximity of the site to the AQMA boundary it has been recommended that a detailed air quality impact assessment is carried out for this development. The proposed development includes commercial retail and residential uses.
- **Germany Beck (Fulford)** – It is intended to develop land at Germany Beck, Fulford for approximately 700 residential dwellings. The proposed development site is located some 3km to the south of York City Centre. There is existing residential development to the north, to the west and to the south west. An air quality impact assessment has been carried out

using DMRB. This has indicated that the proposed development at Germany Beck, together with the other committed developments in the area should not result in any breaches of the current air quality objectives within the vicinity of the site. For the majority of the receptor locations, the predicted annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations with the scheme in place, are no different to the scenario considering the base case plus other, already committed developments. Where a difference does occur it is limited to a maximum change of 0.3µg/m³. Such increases are seen along the Fulford Road / Main Street corridor. A small increase of 0.2µg/m³ is also observed at one receptor along Heslington Lane. Small increases in particulate concentrations (PM₁₀) (maximum 0.2µg/m³) are also observed at the same receptor locations. Increases in NO₂ and PM₁₀ of this magnitude are not considered significant in terms of air quality.

- **A59 Park and Ride** : The A59 Park and Ride has been short-listed to two proposed areas – the first to the north-east of the A59/A1237 roundabout and the second to the south-west of the same roundabout. Consultants are currently examining public transport routes between York Central and the Outer Ring Road and these could follow either the alignment of the East Coast Main Line or the A59 Poppleton Road. The introduction of this new park and ride is likely to reduce the number of vehicular journeys into the city centre and thus from an air quality perspective is likely to have minor positive impacts on air quality levels. The Environmental Protection Unit will decide if an air quality impact assessment is appropriate for this development when further information is available as to specific proposals.

12.3 Air Quality Planning Policies

The land use planning system is integral to improving air quality and guidance has been prepared to assist local authorities incorporate air quality considerations into planning decisions. The guidance describes the contributions that local planning policy can make to long term improvements in air quality through strategic and development control planning employing existing planning policy guidance.

DEFRA has issued technical and policy guidance on local review and assessment including the role of planning in local air quality management. The guidance confirms that air quality may be a material consideration to land use and development. It does, however, recognise that the weight given to air quality issues needs to be addressed on a case by case basis.

The guidance attributes particular importance where the proposed development is within, or adjacent to, an AQMA, or could result in the designation of an AQMA or extension of an existing AQMA. However, the guidance makes clear that planning applications within or adjacent to AQMAs should not be refused if the developments result in a deterioration of local air quality, as such an approach could sterilise development, particularly where local authorities have designated their entire areas as AQMAs

The following air quality / planning procedures exist and are used by City of York Council Officers.

- **Local Plan : Policy GP4b “Air Quality”** – this policy lists the conditions under which developers must assess the impact of their development on air quality. It also discusses the concept that, where appropriate, applicants will be expected to sign an agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country planning Act 1990 to ensure that mitigation measures deemed necessary for the development to proceed are carried out.
- **PPS23 : Planning and Pollution Control** – PPS23 states that all consideration of air quality issues arising from a development is capable of being a material planning consideration, particularly where development is inside or adjacent to an AQMA, where the development could result in the declaration of an AQMA, or where the development could conflict with, or render unworkable, elements of the local authorities Air Quality Action Plan.
- **City of York Council Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Air Quality** - The Environmental Protection Unit intends to produce Supplementary Planning Guidance in the near future detailing the conditions under which an air quality impact assessment will be required for a development proposal. This will also cover specific information that should be included within an Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA). This will be particularly useful for developers wishing to carry out AQIA and also to provide information to City of York Council Planning department about air quality issues.