

Examination Note: Air Quality Management Areas Update

This note provides an update on the status of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district councils since submission of the Joint Local Plan in December 2024. The need for this update arose as Action point number 3, during the Stage 2 Hearings, relating to Matter 1. The councils were asked to provide a note to capture the current revocation status.

At the Time of Submission, six AQMAs were in force within the plan area due to their exceedance of the annual mean objective of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). At the Time of Submission, these were recorded by DEFRA on both its interactive AQMA map¹ and its published list of local authorities with AQMAs².

South Oxfordshire

- Henley-on-Thames
- Wallingford
- Watlington

Vale of White Horse

- Abingdon-on-Thames
- Botley
- Marcham

Since submission, monitoring has demonstrated sustained improvements in air quality in the previously identified locations. Additionally, DEFRA welcomes revocations of all AQMAs with more than three years of compliance. As a result, five of the six AQMAs have been formally revoked, and, at the time of writing only the Botley AQMA in Vale of White Horse remains active. This position is reflected in DEFRA's Local Air Quality

¹ [AQMAs Interactive Map](#)

² [List of Local Authorities with AQMAs](#)

Management (LAQM) Portal³, which is the system used by local authorities to submit and manage AQMA information.

Basis for designation of the former AQMAs

Table 1 below summarises the original designation of each AQMA, including the date it came into force, the pollutant giving rise to the declaration, and the monitored exceedance of the relevant annual mean air quality objective. For nitrogen dioxide the threshold for exceedance is 40 micrograms per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)⁴.

Table 1: AQMA declarations and reasons for designation

AQMA	Date declared	Pollutant exceeding objective	Level of Exceedance: at time of declaration
Henley-on-Thames	01/01/2003	Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)	45.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Wallingford	28/03/2006	Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)	48.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Watlington	31/03/2009	Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)	51.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Abingdon-on-Thames	23/08/2006	Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)	63.2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Botley	29/04/2008	Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)	58.8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
Marcham	15/06/2015	Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)	53.9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

³ [Local Air Quality Management Portal](#)

⁴ [National air quality objectives and European Directive limit and target values for the protection of human health](#)

Basis for revocation of AQMAs

The AQMAs were revoked following a sustained period of monitoring demonstrating compliance with the relevant national air quality objectives. Table 2 below summarises the monitoring evidence that supported revocation. The dates below are all after the JLP submission date of December 2024.

Table 2: Monitoring evidence supporting AQMA revocations

AQMA	Pollutant	Annual Mean NO ₂ Monitoring Results: 2024	Years in Compliance	Revocation date
Henley-on-Thames	Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	31.2 µg/m ³	5	26/05/2026
Wallingford	Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	25.7 µg/m ³	5	09/04/2025
Watlington	Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	23.7 µg/m ³	5	26/05/2026
Abingdon-on-Thames	Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	22.5 µg/m ³	5	09/04/2025
Marcham	Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	25.1 µg/m ³	5	26/05/2026

Botley, with a 2024 monitoring result of 34 µg/m³ and two years of compliance, is not being proposed as a revocation at this time.

DEFRA records update

DEFRA's interactive AQMA map reflects the current position and shows only the Botley AQMA remaining active in the Local Plan area. The same position is reflected in DEFRA's Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Portal.

However, DEFRA's published list of local authorities with AQMAs and its published list of AQMA revocations⁵ have not yet been updated to reflect all recent changes within South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. The councils have contacted DEFRA to request that these published records are updated. Notwithstanding this, the LAQM Portal and DEFRA's interactive AQMA map both reflect the current AQMA position within the plan area.

⁵ [List of Revoked AQMAs](#)