

This report is public	
Air Quality Update	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	3 February 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Robert Parkinson
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	2 December 2025
Report of	Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, Tim Hughes

Purpose of report

To request Executive approval to confirm the revocation of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Bicester.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To revoke Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The measured levels of nitrogen dioxide in the Air Quality Management Area have been below the air quality objective of 40µg/m³ (micrograms - one-millionth of a gram - per cubic meter of air) for the last five years. In accordance with the guidance from the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) this AQMA should now be revoked.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	There are no financial implications arising from this report for the council, AQMA No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester) will continue to be reviewed for the next twelve months to ensure that the levels will remain below the requirement which will be met within existing budget. Kimberley Digweed - Finance Business Partner, 3 December 2025

Legal	The LAQM Technical Guidance 2022 notes that “There should not be any declared AQMAs for which compliance with the relevant objective has been achieved for a consecutive five-year period.” (Point 3.57, page 50). The report notes that this criteria has been met and therefore proceeding to revoke the AQMA helps to ensure we are complying with the guidance. The DEFRA guidance on AQMAs notes that in order “To avoid cycling between declaring, revoking and declaring again, local authorities should be confident that the years counted towards full compliance are representative of typical conditions and therefore, are in a position to assure local communities that achievement with objectives will be maintained after revocation as required through Environment Act 1995, as amended by Environment Act 2021. The Council should be satisfied that it has met the necessary requirements within the guidance before proceeding. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 3 December 2025			
Risk Management	There is an increase in risk to health to prolonged and continuous exposure to poor air quality. This risk is being managed through the service risk register and will be escalated if necessary to the Leadership register. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 2 December 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	X			There are no equalities and inclusion implications as a direct consequence to this report. Improving air quality across the district will have a positive benefit for all residents. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 2 December 2025
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				N/A
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		The proposed revocation of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is based on sustained compliance with national air quality objectives over a five-year period, evidencing a significant and

				consistent improvement in local air quality. This outcome contributes positively to public health and environmental quality, aligning with the Council's climate actions and wider objectives to reduce emissions and enhance resilience. The retention of AQMAs where exceedances persist ensures that targeted interventions remain in place, supporting continued progress towards statutory obligations and long-term environmental sustainability Hitesh Mahawar, Climate Change Programme Manager, 2 December 2025
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	Environmental stewardship – to safeguard the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to improve air quality 			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	The following partners have been consulted on the Air Quality Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfordshire County Council Highways • Planning Policy • Place and Regeneration: Biodiversity and Climate Resilience 			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 as amended by the Environment Act (2021), established the legislative framework for local air quality management. Under the Act, the Council has a statutory duty to review and assess air quality in the district against national air quality objectives and co-ordinate actions to improve air quality where exceedances are identified.
- 3.2 Where an air quality objective is unlikely to be or is not being met an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared. Once an AQMA has been declared the Council is required to develop an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) outlining the measures required to improve air quality in that area. We have therefore had an Air Quality Action Plan since 2011 when the first AQMA was declared on Hennef Way and the latest, the most recent update was in 2024.

- 3.3 Four AQMAs were declared in Cherwell for exceedances of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide. The AQMAs are/were:
- AQMA No.1 - Hennef Way, Banbury (declared in 2011)
 - AQMA No.2 - Horsefair/North Bar, Banbury (2014)
 - AQMA No.3 - Bicester Road, Kidlington (2014)
 - AQMA No.4 - Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester (2015)
- 3.4 AQMAs 2 and 3 have since been revoked in 2024 as the annual measured average air pollution levels were more than ten percent below the DEFRA annual target for five years.
- 3.4 Nitrogen dioxide from road transport sources has been identified as the pollutant of concern in Cherwell. The Hennef Way AQMA remains the only area where nitrogen dioxide levels remain above the threshold level. This is primarily due to motor vehicle emissions. Opportunities to further reduce nitrogen dioxide levels in this area are limited due to Hennef Way being the main route from the M40 into Banbury, however this has also fallen since it was declared in 2011 when levels were over 80 µg/m³ against an annual mean air quality objective of 40 µg/m³, in 2024 the level at the point of nearest exposure had dropped to around 54 µg/m³
- 3.5 The revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of compliance with the relevant objective as evidenced through monitoring. Where there have been no exceedances for the past five years, local authorities **must** proceed with plans to revoke the AQMA – <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/faqs/faq-142-three-or-more-years-of-compliance-with-air-quality-objectives/>

4. Details

- 4.1 Nitrogen dioxide levels are measured using diffusion tubes over a calendar year. The tubes are changed monthly, and the results are used to calculate the annual mean for each site. The annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide against which the data is assessed is 40µg/m³.
- 4.2 In 2024 monitoring was undertaken using diffusion tubes at 37 locations across the district. The measured levels in the two AQMAs for 2024 and also the previous four years are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Annual Mean Nitrogen Dioxide Monitoring Results (µg/m³)

AQMA	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Status
Hennef Way, Banbury	57.9	58.6	55.0	57.5	54.0	Red
Kings End/ Queens Avenue, Bicester	34.5	34.9	32.6	34.9	23.2	Green

- 4.3 In AQMA No.1 (Hennef Way, Banbury) nitrogen dioxide concentrations continue to fall but still show exceedances of the annual mean objective level.

- 4.4 In AQMA No.4 (Bicester) the measured levels have been below the objective for the last five years, and more than 10% below for the last four years. In accordance with the guidance from Defra this AQMA should be revoked.
- 4.5 Overall the nitrogen dioxide concentrations across the district in 2024 were significantly lower than the concentrations in previous years.
- 4.6 Councils are required to submit Annual Status Reports (ASR) to DEFRA by 30 June each year for their appraisal. The ASR includes a review and assessment of the previous year's monitoring data, and an update on the actions in the AQAP.
- 4.7 The full monitoring data for 2024 can be found in the 2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report [at Appendix 1](#)

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To not revoke AQMA No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester). This option was rejected because local authorities are required to revoke AQMAs where there have been no exceedances of the relevant objective for the past five years.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 In AQMA No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester) the measured levels of nitrogen dioxide have been below the air quality objective of 40µg/m³ for the last five years. The guidance from DEFRA is that revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of compliance with the relevant objective, and where there have been no exceedances for the past five years, the AQMA must be revoked. The Executive are therefore recommended to approve the revocation of this AQMA.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Cherwell District Council Annual Status Report 2025
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/fags/faq-142-three-or-more-years-of-compliance-with-air-quality-objectives/
Report Author	Jim Guest – Environmental Protection Officer / Neil Whitton – Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager
Report Author contact details	jim.guest@cherwell-dc.gov.uk neil.whitton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services, Nicola Riley