

Revocation of air quality management area (AQMA) in Newmarket

Following a successful and sustained reduction in air pollution at Old Station Road in Newmarket, we are writing to let you know that we intend to revoke the air quality management area (AQMA) there. This does not mean that monitoring will stop, but it does mean that it will no longer show on searches as a polluted area for example when people are buying and selling a property in the area.

Below we outline a bit more about AQMAs and our statutory duties.

Local authorities have a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to monitor the quality of air within their administrative areas, produce an annual report and designate special management areas known as air quality management areas (AQMA) where pollutants exceed certain levels.

Following a detailed assessment in 2008 which identified breaches of the annual mean air quality objective (AQO) for nitrogen dioxide, an AQMA was declared along Newmarket High Street and Old Station Road. The formal declaration was made in April 2009.

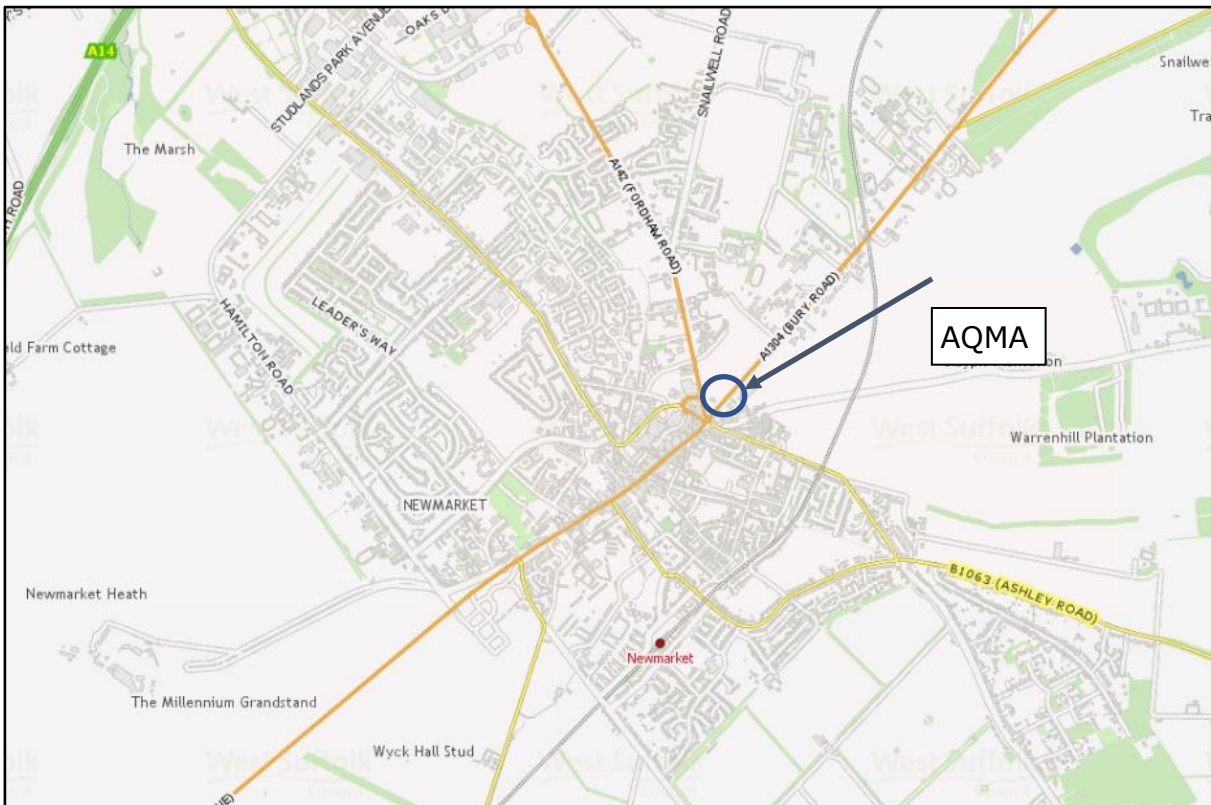
Substantial monitoring was undertaken along High Street from 2008 and sufficient evidence was available to confirm that there were no breaches of the objective and the AQMA could be removed from the High Street. This was formerly completed with an amendment of the AQMA in 2017.

However, at this time, monitoring data along Old Station Road was limited to one monitoring point and there was insufficient evidence to confirm compliance for this part of the AQMA. The AQMA was therefore retained for the short section of Old Station Road from the clock tower roundabout to the junction with Rous Road.

An additional two monitoring points were added along Old Station Road in 2016 and a third additional point was added in 2017, making a total of four monitoring points along approximately 125m of Old Station Road.

Figure 1, below, shows the general location of the AQMA within Newmarket, at the eastern edge of the town centre, and Figure 3, to the rear, shows the current detailed extent of the AQMA, comprising buildings to the north and south of Old Station Road together with the location of the monitoring points within the AQMA.

Figure 1: Map showing the location of the AQMA in relation to Newmarket

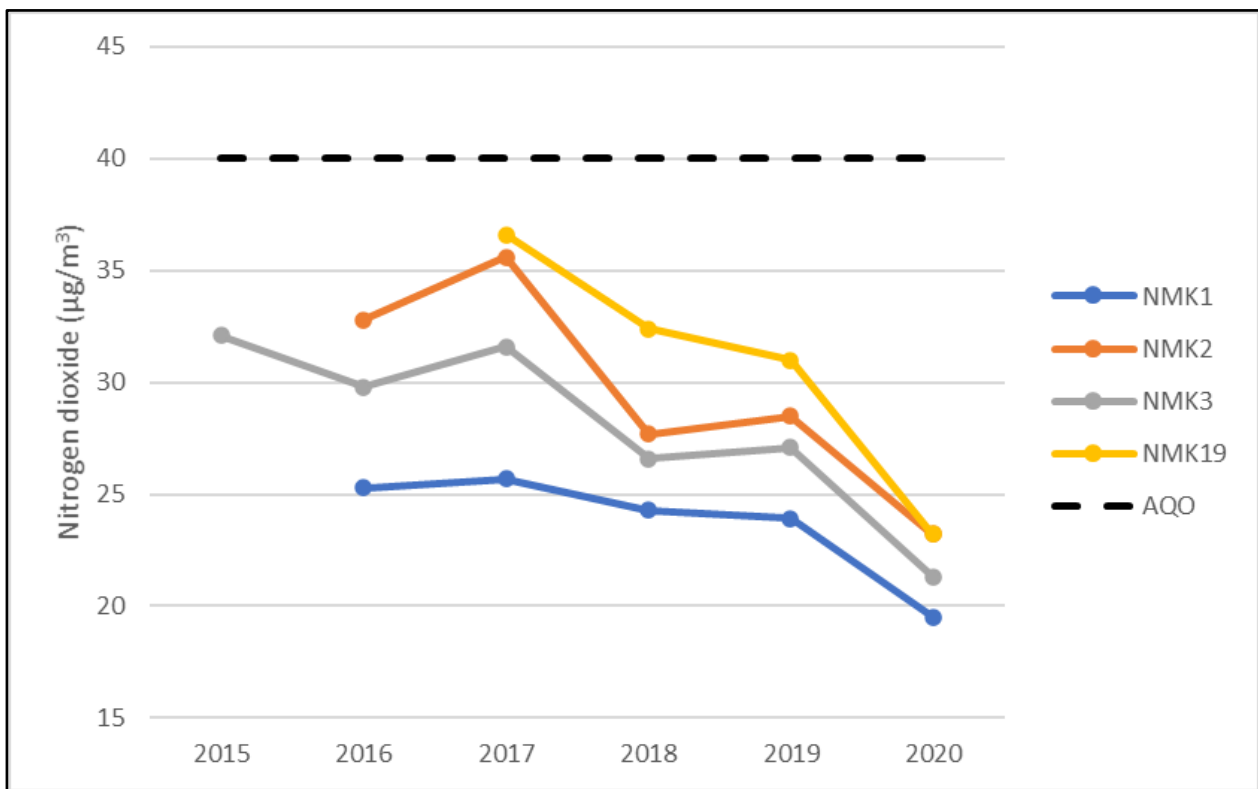


Monitoring of these locations has shown that the levels are comfortably below the objective level of 40 micrograms per meter cubed ($40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), with the highest recorded value being $36.6 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2017. Results are summarised in the below table and graph and show a continued downward trend since 2017. Monitoring points in Newmarket have references starting NMK followed by the location number. Please note that 2020 annual results have been impacted by the various COVID-19 related restrictions in place throughout the year. The decision to revoke the AQMA was made prior to the availability of the 2020 results, however, they are included here for completeness.

Table 1: Results of nitrogen dioxide monitoring along Old Station Road, Newmarket, showing all monitoring below the air quality objective of 40 micrograms per meter cubed.

Monitoring reference	Nitrogen dioxide annual mean ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
NMK1	-	25.3	25.7	24.3	23.9	19.5
NMK2	-	32.8	35.6	27.7	28.5	23.2
NMK3	32.1	29.8	31.6	26.6	27.1	21.3
NMK19	-	-	36.6	32.4	31.0	23.2

Figure 2: Graph showing the measured concentration of nitrogen dioxide within the Newmarket AQMA and general downward trend compared to the air quality objective.



The above results show there is no breach of air quality objectives and there has not been for at least the last five years. Guidance recommends at least three years without a breach of the air quality objective before revocation. The proposed revocation was outlined in our 2020 annual report and Defra have confirmed in their feedback from this report that they agree with the decision to revoke the Newmarket AQMA.

It is therefore concluded that West Suffolk Council should revoke the AQMA as the levels of pollution along Old Station Road in Newmarket are compliant with the nationally set air quality objectives and no longer meet the statutory threshold for an AQMA designation.

Removing the AQMA will also allow West Suffolk Council to concentrate on schemes to improve the air quality throughout the district including enabling zero emission vehicles and undertaking engagement with schools and local communities (when current COVID-19 restrictions allow).

How has this pollution been reduced?

Part of the reason for this reduction will be due to changes to the layout of the clocktower roundabout and improvements to Newmarket High Street undertaken some years ago with more recent reductions likely to be down to changes in car manufacturing with more hybrid and electric vehicles on the road, the latter of which produce zero emissions.

What does this mean for monitoring of pollution levels?

Revocation of the AQMA does not mean that West Suffolk Council are going to stop monitoring air pollution in Newmarket. We are committed to continuing monitoring both in Newmarket and throughout West Suffolk. We are also committed to continuing our work to reduce levels of pollution throughout West Suffolk.

Why are you consulting if the area no longer meets the need for an AQMA?

We are writing to you both to notify you on our intention to revoke the AQMA and also to invite feedback should you think there are any other factors that need to be considered. If you wish to make any representation with regards to these proposals, please email us with your comments at environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk by midday on the 19 July 2021.

Figure 3: Plan showing the extent of the Newmarket AQMA and the locations of the monitoring diffusion tube monitoring points.

