

## **Revocation of air quality management area (AQMA) in Sicklesmere Road**

Following a successful and sustained reduction in air pollution at Sicklesmere Road in Bury St Edmunds, 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 nationally set levels.

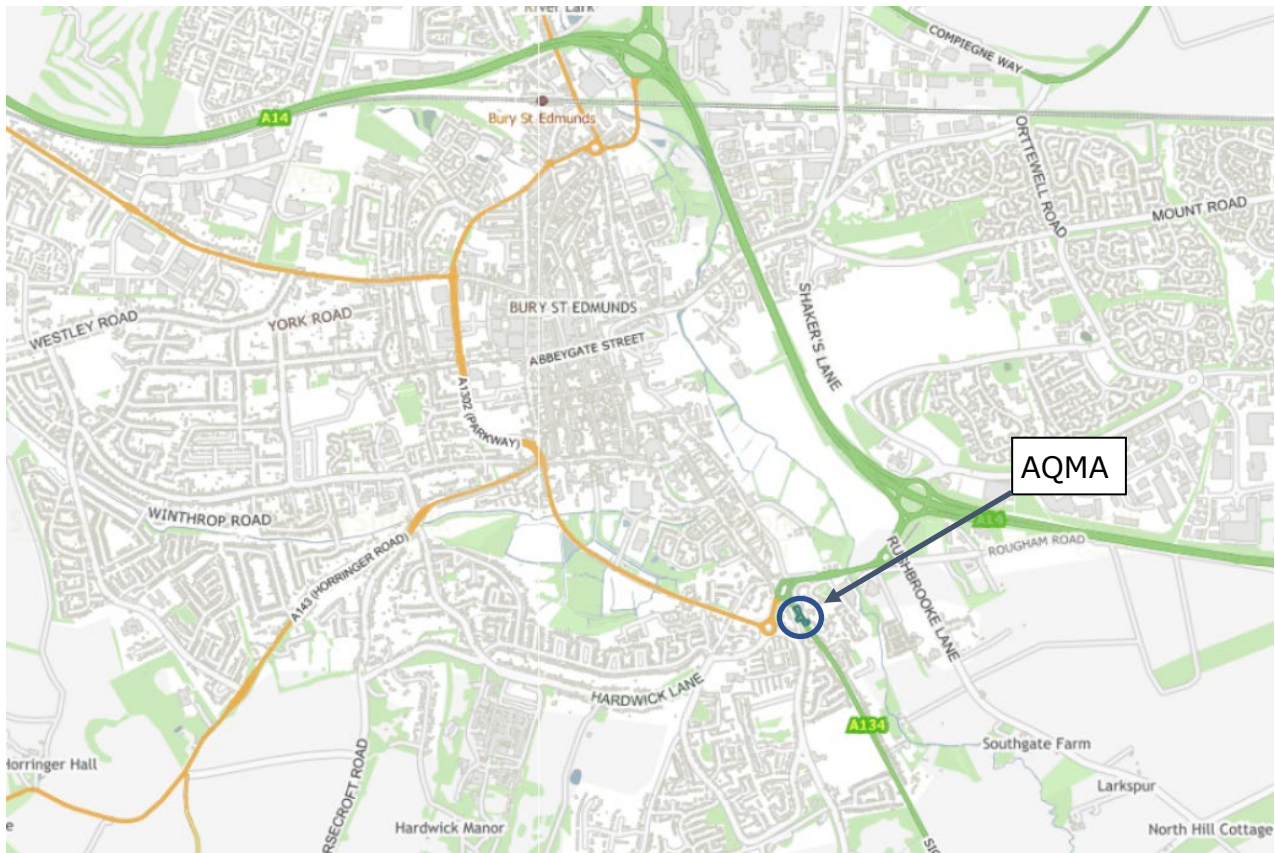
Following a detailed assessment in 2017 which recorded at an annual average mean of 44.7 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide per meter cubed of air ( $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) against a national threshold of 40 micrograms per meter cubed ( $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), an AQMA was declared along Sicklesmere Road in 2018. A subsequent action plan to reduce pollution levels included greater delivery of electric vehicle recharging infrastructure and partnership work to raise awareness of the health impact of pollution caused by vehicle idling.

Substantial monitoring was undertaken along Sicklesmere Road from 2018 to 2023 and sufficient evidence has confirmed that there have been no further breaches of the nitrogen dioxide levels and so legally the AQMA should now be removed from Sicklesmere Road.

There are three monitoring points along approximately 120m of Sicklesmere Road. has shown nitrogen dioxide levels have fallen from a maximum of  $39.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2018 down to  $29.8 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2023.

Figure 1, below, shows the general location of the AQMA within Bury St Edmunds, at the south eastern edge of the town, and Figure 3, at the end of this document, shows the current extent of the AQMA, comprising buildings to the north east and south west of Sicklesmere Road together with the location of the monitoring points within the AQMA.

**Figure 1: Map showing the location of the AQMA in relation to Bury St Edmunds**

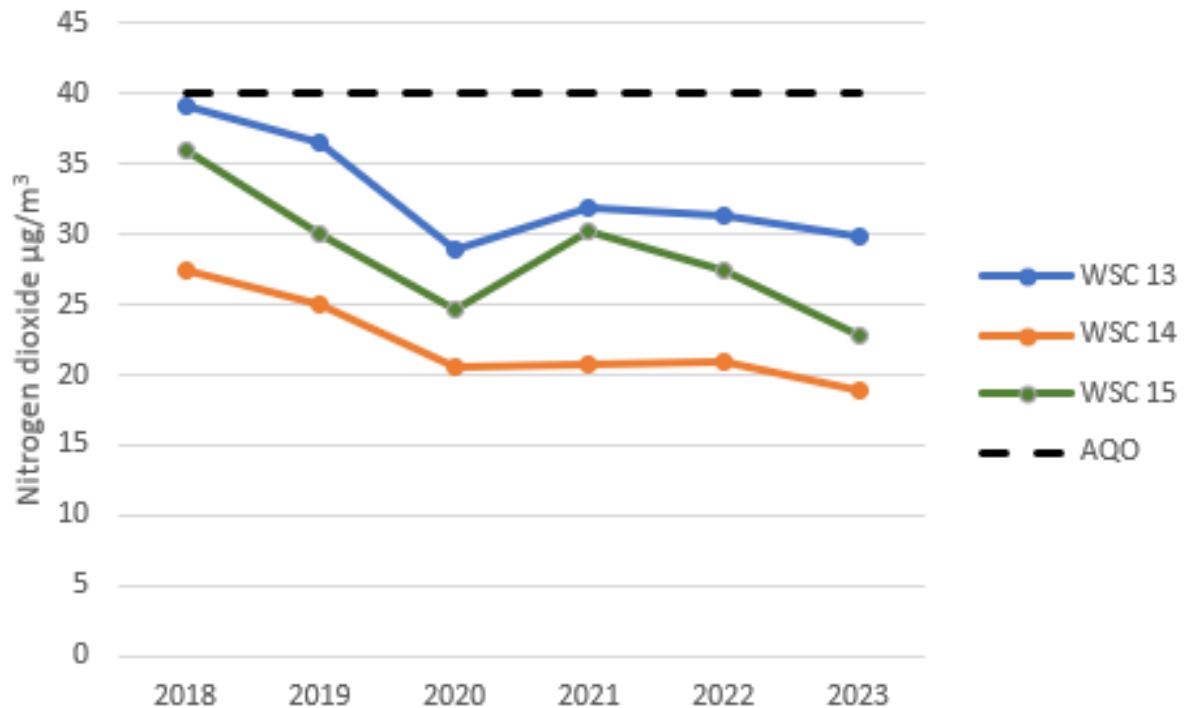


Monitoring of these locations has shown that the levels are comfortably below the objective level of 40 micrograms per metre cubed ( $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), with the highest recorded value being  $39.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2018. Results are summarised in the below table and graph and show a continued downward trend since 2018. Monitoring points in Sicklesmere Road have references starting WSC followed by the location number. Please note that 2020 and 2021 annual results have been impacted by the various COVID-19 related restrictions in place during these years.

**Table 1: Results of nitrogen dioxide monitoring along Sicklesmere Road, Bury St Edmunds, showing all monitoring results to be below the air quality objective of 40 micrograms per metre cubed.**

Monitoring reference	Nitrogen dioxide annual mean ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
WSC 13	39.2	36.6	28.9	31.8	31.3	29.8
WSC 14	27.4	25.0	20.6	20.8	20.9	18.9
WSC 15	36.0	30.1	24.7	30.2	27.4	22.7

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



The above results show there has been no breach of air quality objectives for the past five years. Defra Guidance recommends at least three years without a breach of the air quality objective before revoking an AQMA. The proposed revocation was outlined in our 2023 annual report and Defra have confirmed in their feedback from this report that they agree with the decision to revoke the Sicklesmere Road AQMA.

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

### **How has this pollution been reduced?**

Part of the reason for the reduction has been attributed to changes in car manufacturing including greater production and ownership of electric vehicles which do not produce any exhaust emissions. West Suffolk Council has been working for a number of years to access national funding to improve electric vehicle charging infrastructure including in Bury St Edmunds town centre. And that has coincided with a 692 per cent increase in EV ownership across West Suffolk between 2018 and 2023 (source [Parliament UK - Local area data: Electric vehicles and charging points](#)). According to ZapMap figures for March this year show there are now over 1 million fully electric cars on UK roads, an increase of more than 1000 per cent on five years ago. [Zapmap - How many EVs are there in the UK - EV market statistics 2024](#)

## 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 along Sicklesmere Road. We are committed to continuing monitoring both in Bury St Edmunds 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 have written to residents in the AQMA and other stakeholders to outline our intent to revoke the AQMA and to invite feedback should you think there are any other factors that need to be considered. Anyone who wishes to make a representation with regards to these proposals, should email their comments to [environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk) by 5pm on the 7 June 2024.

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

