

## **Swaffham Air Quality – Communications Plan**

The declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) doesn't mean a halt on development in that community. The purpose is to improve air quality in a designated area, with a view to reducing potential impacts on human health and the environment. This is a positive thing. Improved air quality has a positive impact on the local environment within the AQMA itself, but can also have wider positive impacts on a local community through improving traffic flow, improved or more accessible public transport, improved or more accessible alternative transport options such as for cyclists and pedestrians, improved community engagement such as through schools and local businesses, to achieve positive outcomes for the community. This may have wider positive impacts on the community as a place to live in, work in or visit.

Local issues, whilst not severe compared to many locations on the major road networks and within cities and large towns, do need to be addressed to meet air quality objectives and to avoid any further reduction in air quality in the future. New vehicles are getting cleaner, however numbers of vehicles continue to increase and whilst over time local air quality may improve due to improvements in technology and the type of vehicles on the road, early intervention is needed to help drive positive change.

It does require that planning applications that relate to land or premises within the designated AQMA, or that might affect the AQMA, take account of the issues affecting the designated area. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate that they've considered the impact of their development on the AQMA and where appropriate have considered and offered suitable mitigation measures to reduce the impact. In doing so they'll need to take account of the air quality action plan for the designated area and any other relevant policies or plans relating to the area, which will include such as local transport plans.

An air quality action plan will be developed, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, during the first 12 months after declaration of an AQMA. The action plan will detail measures to be considered, developed and implemented with the aim of improving air quality in a designated area. This plan is submitted to the Department for the Environment, Food Rural Affairs, is published locally and results in further ongoing assessment to monitor progress against the action plan.

The declaration of an AQMA can, in certain circumstances, attract funding from central government on a case by case basis to assist the process. Additionally, declaration of an AQMA requires relevant agencies to work together with a common goal of improving air quality, for example around transport planning.

The Council will communicate with the community regarding an AQMA through the following means:-

- Engagement with Elected Members through the approval process;
- Engagement with local Elected Members as appropriate outside of the approval process;
- By publishing relevant information on the air quality pages of the Council website, linked to the relevant planning web-pages;
- Engagement with local Town and Parish Councils as appropriate;
- Community information and engagement through publishing in local media, local meetings, focus groups and consultation in respect of an air quality action plan;
- The provision of information to schools and other organised community groups.

Throughout the process the focus will be on the positive benefits of and intended outcomes from, the AQMA process and a consistent message will be relayed across media platforms.