



Marcham Air Quality Management Area and Air Quality Action Plan Consultation 2015

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

A summary of consultation undertaken by the council between January and March 2015 to help define the area to be included in an Air Quality Management Area for Marcham and to consider possible measures to include in an Air Quality Action Plan to improve air quality in Marcham.

MARCH 2015

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the consultation that Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) undertook between January and March 2015 on the area to be included in an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Marcham and to consider measures to include in an air quality action plan (AQAP) for Marcham.

The consultation sought the views of various organisations, local communities and individuals on proposals to declare an AQMA in Marcham; on the area to be included within the AQMA, and on measures intended to bring about air quality improvements in Marcham.

Opportunities were created for members of the public to provide feedback via our online consultation tool and in writing.

A total of 29 people and organisations responded to the consultation.

Most respondents agreed with the findings of the detailed air quality assessment and on the need for an AQMA in Marcham. There was support for the proposed boundaries of the AQMA, although a significant number of respondents felt that the eastern boundary should be extended along the A415 to the eastern boundary of Marcham village. There was also widespread support for the measures we proposed for consideration to address air quality issues in Marcham. Respondents also proposed other measures to address air quality issues in Marcham.

THE AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA

Monitoring of nitrogen dioxide near the A415 in Marcham has shown that levels were exceeding the annual Air Quality Objective (AQO). A detailed assessment was undertaken in November 2014 in order to model nitrogen dioxide levels over a wider area. This assessment concluded that the AQO would be exceeded at some locations and that the council should consider declaring an AQMA covering all locations where the AQO was not predicted to be met. The council has proposed an area which includes all residential property in Marcham where the AQO is not predicted to be met.

THE AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

Where an AQMA has been declared the council has to draw up an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) in consultation with stakeholders and local residents. The AQAP must contain measures which can be considered to improve local air quality. The opportunity was taken to consult on proposed measures at the same time as the consultation on the AQMA and to seek proposals for other measures from the consultees. A district wide AQAP was approved by the General Licensing Committee in 2014 and it is envisaged that the measures approved for Marcham will form an additional chapter in the district wide AQAP.

THE CONSULTATION

We consulted local residents and stakeholders between 26 January and 13 March 2015 on:

- the conclusions of the detailed air quality assessment of the need to declare an AQMA in Marcham
- the area to be included in an AQMA
- the measures to be included in an AQAP.

We consulted local residents and stakeholders to gather feedback on whether they felt the conclusions of the detailed assessment were appropriate, whether the proposed boundaries of the AQMA were appropriate, to consider their views on the measures proposed to improve air quality and to consider any other proposals which could improve air quality in Marcham. We approached a wide range of stakeholders, including both statutory and non-statutory consultees. A full list of the people and organisations that we consulted is shown in Appendix 1 – Consultees.

To raise an awareness of the consultation we published details on our website and sent email notifications to our key stakeholders. Consultation packs were hand delivered to all properties within the boundary of the proposed AQMA and other properties near the A415 in Marcham. Consultation packs included a consultation letter, a summary of the detailed assessment findings, and a map of the proposed area and background information which included proposed measures to improve air quality in Marcham.

Members of the public were able to submit comments online using the council's consultation system during this period (<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/airquality>). We also accepted comments made in writing to the Council Offices, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon OX14 3JE.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

29 responses were received in response to the consultation from members of the public and organisations interested in the air quality proposals for Marcham.

General consultation comments

THE PROPOSED AQMA IN MARCHAM

The air quality issues in Marcham are all traffic related. The road is a busy 'A' road linking Abingdon to Witney and providing a link from the A34 to the A420. In Marcham this road is narrow and winding and there are properties very close to the road. The road is so narrow at some points, that larger vehicles obstruct the flow of traffic coming the other way. This can cause localised congestion in both directions.

The detailed assessment concluded that the council should consider declaring an AQMA. We asked for views on this.

Respondents felt that there is an air pollution problem in Marcham. The need for an AQMA was widely supported by 86% of respondents. There were no responses which did not support the conclusions of the detailed assessment.

It is obvious that the amount of traffic, particularly lorries that come through the village on the A415 is having a deleterious effect on the air quality in the area of the main road.

Some days we can actually taste and smell the fumes from the road in our living room. All our family suffer quite regularly from throat problems i.e. sore throats and coughs.

The results of the survey are hardly surprising. It's obvious that where you have heavy traffic trundling through an area which is easily locked up due to HGVs and other large vehicles causing stoppages at the bends that the air quality will be severely affected.

THE PROPOSED AQMA BOUNDARIES

We asked for views on the proposed boundaries to the AQMA. All premises where the AQO is predicted to be exceeded are included within the proposed boundaries.

We wholly support this

This marked area seems to cover most of the area closed in by the houses near the road. This is about time this ongoing problem was investigated in much more detail and resolved.

It seems very sensible

The whole of Marcham needs to be covered by this or all that will happen is that traffic will divert and go through the centre of Marcham.

The Parish Council would like to see an extension of the boundary of the AQMA eastwards to take into account the new houses which are closest to the road. This would take the line of the AQMA to a point approximately opposite Howard Cornish Road or the 30 mph sign at the edge of the village.

There was a mixed response on the question of the suitability of the proposed boundaries to the AQMA, a majority of respondents (35 %) felt that the proposed boundaries of the AQMA are about right. However a significant number of respondents (31 %), including the parish council, wanted the boundary extended along the A415 to the eastern boundary of the village. The area to the east of the village is more open and properties are further from the road than within the proposed AQMA area. All properties within this area were consulted and all of the four respondents from this area were in favour of an extension to the proposed boundary. Analysis of recent monitoring indicates high kerbside levels of nitrogen dioxide east of the proposed AQMA boundary.

The council has discretion on the size of area declared as an AQMA, so long as it includes all properties where the AQO is not predicted to be met. The detailed assessment did not predict exceedence of the AQO to the east of the proposed AQMA area, but did identify high levels of nitrogen dioxide at the kerbside. In view of the consultation responses and the results of recent monitoring it seems wholly appropriate to extend the boundary eastwards as requested.

Views on actions proposed in the draft plan

All measures proposed to improve local air quality were supported by the majority of respondents to the consultation. However two respondents expressed concern that a weight restriction zone could result in the remaining traffic speeding up through the village.

The table below shows the number of positive and negative comments in relation to all of the actions proposed in the draft plan.

Table 1

Action	Measure	Number of responses
1	Consider with OCC imposing a weight restriction limit on the A415 through Marcham to discourage HGVs and larger vehicles.	20 for 0 against
2	Consider with OCC the potential for building a by-pass. Funding and planning permission would need to be sought to make this a real possibility.	22 for 2 against
3	Consider commissioning a study relating to the feasibility of introducing a Low Emission Zone limiting the use of the existing road. This would look at the cost benefits of such a scheme on air quality within Marcham.	14 for 0 against

The most popular measures were the proposals for a weight restriction limit and for consideration of a by-pass which were favoured by 69% and 76% of respondents respectively. The proposal for a low emission zone was supported by 48% of respondents. There were just two respondents who indicated that they were against the proposal for a by-pass.

The issue of a by-pass is a non starter. A by-pass has been considered many times over the past 50 years. There has never been the funding and in the current economic climate this will not change.

The second option is not realistic because OCC will not provide permission nor funding, using government cuts as their usual, convenient excuse.

There is support for a by-pass in Marcham however this would only be possible as a result of significant additional housing development in the area. However this action should remain as a long term goal.

Other actions suggested by consultees

We asked consultees if they had any further suggestions for actions to be included within the plan. A total of 8 suggestions were made which are detailed in Table 2 below, along with our response.

Table 2

Proposal	Proposed action	Feedback to proposal
1	reduce speed limit to 20mph	this will form part of the study on the feasibility of a low emission zone
2	change the layout at the A34 roundabout where the A415 passes under it, this would then hopefully prevent the traffic tailback to Marcham whenever there is a problem on the A34	this will form part of the study on the feasibility of a low emission zone
3	reduce the road width around the narrow bends	this will form part of the study on the feasibility of a low emission zone
4	include preferred routes for freight vehicles in a national journey planning data base	Oxfordshire County Council have just signed up to this in the hope of directing freight vehicles away from sensitive areas like Marcham
5	introduce physical traffic calming in Marcham to control speed	this will form part of the study on the feasibility of a low emission zone
6	reduce the road width in Marcham to control speed	this will form part of the study on the feasibility of a low emission zone
7	improve the A415/A338 Frilford junction, to reduce tailbacks into Marcham	this will form part of the study on the feasibility of a low emission zone
8	reclassify the A415 as a B road	this will form part of the study on the feasibility of a low emission zone

There is general acceptance that there is a need to create an AQMA. There are mixed opinions on how far the eastern boundary should extend. There appears to be a good deal of local support for the extension of the area along the A415 and monitoring indicates poor air quality at the kerbside in this area. We have taken account of the views expressed in

the consultation responses and have amended the proposed boundary of the AQMA to the eastern boundary sign for the village. This will have the added benefit of making the AQMA area easily recognisable as the area along the A415 between the east and west village boundary signs. There is widespread support for the measures proposed for consideration to improve local air quality.

NEXT STEPS

Once the order has been approved, the AQMA will need to be publicised and details of the AQMA and AQAP actions will be published on the website.

The details of the declaration of the AQMA, the consultation and the amendments to the district wide AQAP will be forwarded to Defra.

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTEES

Statutory

Oxfordshire County Council
Thames Valley Health Protection Unit
Highways Agency
Environment Agency
Freight Transport Association
Oxford City Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
Marcham Parish Council

Non statutory

Local residents
Abingdon Chamber of Commerce
VWHDC council leader
Marcham district councillor
Marcham county councillor and opposition leader
Cabinet member for Health and Housing
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council