

# Air Quality in Fife Advice for Developers



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This guide does not replace the published technical guidance.

## Introduction

Fife's air quality is generally good and it is important we keep it that way. Good air quality is essential for our health and people have a right to expect that the air they breathe will not harm them. Considering air quality *before* submitting a planning application is likely to save you time and money. It will contribute to the improvement of air quality and it will help to secure national air quality objectives. Early consultation on air quality is actively encouraged.

Many factors can affect air quality, for example emissions from road traffic and other transportation, industrial emissions, mining and quarrying (including opencast), energy production and agricultural activities. In Fife, the biggest impact is emissions from road traffic.

This guide offers simple advice on when you need to complete an air quality impact assessment to make sure your development site is suitable for its proposed end-use.

## The need for assessment

Air quality is a *material planning consideration*<sup>1</sup>. An impact assessment will be required where there is risk of a significant change in air quality, either where a proposed new development is likely to increase local emissions, or from the exposure of new residents or workers to any air pollution in the local area.

### Effects of the local area on the development

Existing background and predicted future air quality should be considered in terms of whether Scottish air quality objectives might be being approached or exceeded. The presence of an existing Air Quality Management Area, busy road or any other source of air pollution could mean an air quality impact assessment will be required for the proposed development.

### Effects of the development on the local area

Construction and occupation of the proposed development has the potential to increase road traffic emissions. An air quality impact assessment will be required<sup>2</sup> if the proposal will introduce more than ten new parking spaces and any of the following conditions are met:

- Ten or more new residential units
- Residential development > 0.5 Ha
- Commercial floorspace > 1000 m<sup>2</sup>
- Commercial development > 1 Ha.

In addition, any development that includes a centralised energy facility, biomass plant or district heating will need an air quality impact assessment. *Figure 1* provides a flowchart.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Executive (Scottish Government), 2000, "*Planning, Environmental Protection & Regulation (PAN 51)*".

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Protection Scotland and Royal Town Planning Institution, 2017, "*Delivering Cleaner Air for Scotland, Development Planning & Management*" or Environmental Protection UK and Institute of Air Quality Management, 2017, "*Land-Use Planning & Development Control: Planning for Air Quality*".

### **a. Simple assessment**

A simple assessment is defined as one relying on already published information without any quantification of effects. If an air quality impact assessment is required, the applicant should seek to obtain an understanding of existing baseline conditions from published material such as Fife Council's "Fife Air Quality Annual Progress Report" and other available information.

The simple assessment should consider the risk from emissions, both during the construction phase of the development and during its proposed future use (e.g. predicted increased vehicle movements), then compare them with the indicative criteria below. The possibility of cumulative contributions from other nearby developments should also be evaluated.

Relevant criteria for assessment will depend on a number of factors including proximity to an existing Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The applicant should consider whether the proposed development will cause any significant changes such as:

- Daily vehicle movements increasing by >100 within or near an existing AQMA, or daily vehicle movements increasing by >500 elsewhere
- Daily H.G.V. movements increasing by >25 within or near an existing AQMA, or daily H.G.V. movements increasing by >100 elsewhere
- A main road realignment of >5 m
- The introduction of a roundabout or traffic control
- Creating or changing a bus station
- Creating underground car parking
- Combustion plant such as stand-by generators
- Any other sources of air pollution.

Reference should be made to Table 6.2 of the technical guidance (EPS and RTP1 or EPUK and IAQM).

Note: the term Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) is equivalent to daily vehicle movements.

If the simple impact assessment demonstrates that none of the above criteria will be met or exceeded, then the findings should be set out in a suitable Air Quality Impact Assessment report and the report submitted to the Planning department for consideration.

### **b. Detailed assessment**

A detailed assessment is defined as one that is completed with the aid of a predictive technique such as dispersion modelling. If the proposed development meets any of the criteria listed above, then a detailed assessment will be required. The Air Quality Impact Assessment should be completed by a suitably-qualified and experienced environmental consultant and the report submitted to the Planning department for consideration.

Minimising the impact of new developments on air quality can take many forms including provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure (currently one per ten homes or 1000 m<sup>2</sup>), publication of a detailed travel plan that sets out measures to encourage sustainable modes of transport, and specification of minimum standards for gas-fired boilers.

## The planning process

To deliver Cleaner Air for Scotland, the requirement for an air quality impact assessment should be considered thoroughly before a full planning application is submitted. It is essential that applicants and their agents provide as much information as possible to the council at every stage of the planning process. Withholding information could delay your application.

“Any consideration of the quality of ... air ... and potential impacts arising from development, possibly leading to a proven impact on health, is capable of being a material consideration” – Planning Advice Note 51 (Para 49).

## Our air quality action planning

Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 places a duty<sup>3</sup> on Fife Council to monitor local air quality. The Land & Air Quality Team routinely monitors air quality at around sixty locations in Fife, with additional real-time automatic monitoring stations located in Cupar, Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Rosyth. At the time of writing, there are two Air Quality Management Areas in Fife: one at *Appin Crescent in Dunfermline* and another at *Bonnygate in Cupar*. The council’s Air Quality Action Plans are available online at [www.fife.gov.uk/airquality](http://www.fife.gov.uk/airquality).

The council also promotes and encourages mitigation strategies by integrating air quality considerations into council plans, encouraging the use of public transport and cycle networks, optimising traffic management, promoting sustainable development, reducing emissions from council fleet and contract vehicles and raising awareness of local air quality issues to encourage the public and businesses to participate in bringing about improvements.

## Choosing a consultant

Many of the processes involved in the production of an air quality impact assessment will require the use of specialist environmental consultants. When appointing a consultant, please ensure they fully understand and can meet the requirements of the technical guidance. Fife Council cannot recommend consultants; reference may be made to trade directories.

## Contact us

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<sup>3</sup> Dept. for Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs, 2018, “*Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance TG(16)*”.

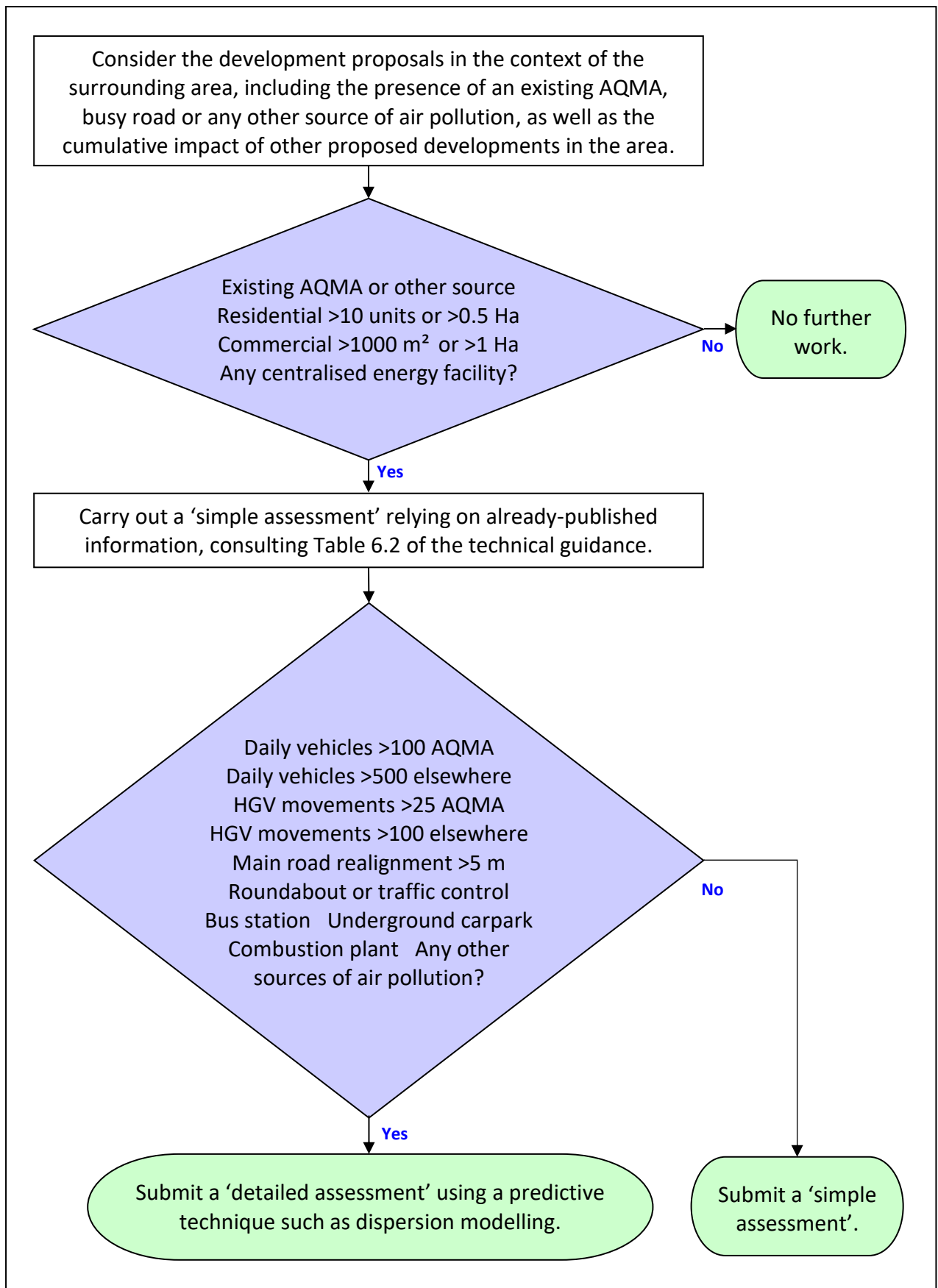


Figure 1: Procedure for assessing and addressing air quality concerns.