



**Planning rules  
to change to  
protect  
against air  
pollution**

**DLP BRIEFING NOTE 187**

Prepared by  
**DLP Planning Consultants**

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## **New planning guidance to ensure local authorities prioritise air quality in planning decisions**

The Environmental Audit Committee's latest report, 'Action on Air Quality', recommends that *new schools, hospitals and care homes must not be built next to air pollution hotspots* such as road intersections to help reduce tens of thousands of deaths caused by nitrogen dioxide and particulate pollution each year.

The Report suggests that "urgent change is needed in transport and planning policy to save lives and ensure that the UK meets European safety targets much sooner than the expected dates indicated by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs."

It calls local authorities to use the existing air quality policy in National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that new schools and workplaces have adequate public transport links and be easily reached by bicycle or foot from the surrounding community to reduce the need for car journeys.

### **Legal Air Quality Obligations and Low Emission Zones**

The Committee recommends including legal air quality obligations in new infrastructure and road building plans. The Report also calls for the introduction of a national framework of Low Emission Zones (LEZs) to enable LEZs to be rolled out across the country.

London has operated a zone since 2008 and LEZs are one of the "most powerful tools" that local authorities have for controlling vehicle emissions, according to the report.

### **Committee Recommendations**

Further to the introduction of LEZs, the Report calls on the Government to take urgent action to comply with legal limits on air pollution and save lives by implementing the following recommendations:

- Include legal air quality obligations in new infrastructure and road building plans;
- Close legal loopholes that allow mechanics firms to remove engine filter from HGV's;
- Examine fiscal measures to gradually encourage a move away from diesel vehicles;
- Consider introducing a diesel scrappage scheme to help drivers switch to cleaner vehicles;
- Launch an independent public inquiry to look at the required action on air pollution;
- Apply pressure at European level to ensure effective EU legislation and 5 emission standards backed up by a robust testing regime.

The Report at this stage is advisory, but it may lead to a more robust system of air quality management and this is likely then to become a requirement for testing new development proposals

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