

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for London Plan Guidance

London Plan Guidance:	Air Quality Positive
Teams involved:	London Plan team and Air Quality team
Date:	February 2023

Who is the guidance aimed at and what are the key issues to be aware of?

The Air Quality Positive (AQP) approach aims to maximise the benefits to local air quality in and around significant development site or masterplan areas; and minimise exposure to existing sources of poor air quality. It encourages planners, designers, architects and air quality experts to actively seek ways to achieve the best possible outcomes from their developments in terms of air quality; and to go beyond simply meeting the maximum threshold of allowable contribution to air pollution.

For large-scale development requiring submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), it is expected that air quality expertise has been engaged throughout the design process in order to maximise the potential benefits. The AQP approach does not use a threshold in its assessment; it instead brings together a range of evidence in support of a planning application to show how air quality has been considered holistically, and how the proposal provides benefits to air quality.

London Plan policy SI 1 C states that masterplans and development briefs for large-scale development proposals subject to an EIA should be accompanied by an AQP Statement. These statements should demonstrate:

- how proposals have considered ways to maximise benefits to local air quality
- what measures or design features will be put in place to reduce exposure to pollution, and how they will achieve this.

The guidance sets out: the minimum standards for an acceptable AQP Statement and how to apply the approach to different scales of development, and at different stages in the planning process (e.g. at the masterplanning stage versus at the detailed-application stage).

The guidance is aimed at local authority officers, developers, designers and air quality specialists.

The guidance, and the policy it elaborates on, form part of a wider set of integrated policies and interventions (including policies outside the planning system) to improve London's air quality.

Which of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) aims are relevant to the guidance and the impacts identified?

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), set out at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, is relevant to the guidance. Listed below are examples of how the guidance seeks to meet the three aims of the PSED:

1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

The guidance builds on the London Plan policies, which aim to ensure that residents are not treated differently depending on where they live. All Londoners deserve to live in a place that has safe levels of air quality and where their quality of life is not impacted by air pollutants. Areas of high deprivation often have the poorest air quality and this guidance aims to address this imbalance by encouraging development, in all parts of London, to make an active contribution to improve air quality.

2) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The guidance aims to ensure that new large-scale developments make an active contribution to improving air quality in and around a development site or masterplan area; and minimise the exposure to existing sources of poor air quality. The guidance requires applicants to consider a development's impact on air quality throughout the design process. Through an AQP Statement, applicants of large-scale development are required to identify measures that contribute to the delivery of improved air quality. These measures come under the following four key themes:

- better design and reducing exposure
- building emissions
- transport emissions
- innovation and futureproofing.

3) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

By requiring certain large-scale development to take an AQP approach throughout the design process, planners, architects and designers should identify opportunities to enhance access and connectivity for sustainable modes of transport that are prioritised over car use. Consideration of accessible walking, cycling and public transport routes that are attractive within the site can lead to increased social interaction within a community that fosters good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Assessment

List aspects of the guidance that might affect particular groups

Guidance key aspects, chapter headings, theme etc	Particular group that could be affected
3.2 Better design and reducing exposure (buildings, roads and transport links, public and green spaces, land uses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, Asian and minority ethnic people • Pregnant people and maternity • Disabled people • Elderly people • Women • Residents in areas of high level of deprivation
3.3 Building emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, Asian and minority ethnic people • Residents in areas of high level of deprivation
3.4 Transport emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, Asian and minority ethnic people • Pregnant people and maternity • Disabled people • Elderly people • Residents in areas of high level of deprivation
3.5 Innovation and futureproofing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, Asian and minority ethnic people • Pregnant people and maternity • Disabled people • Elderly people • Women • Residents in areas of high level of deprivation

* It should be noted that the general policy requirement and principles are already required through the London Plan. This London Plan Guidance is providing further detail on how the policies should be implemented, and therefore further amplifying the effects

Equality impacts, mitigating actions and justification

This section sets out the positive and negative impacts of the implementation of this guidance, both known and potential, for specified groups.

The objectives from the London Plan Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) and the EqlA guide questions are used where relevant to structure the answers.

For negative impacts, mitigating actions to minimise or eliminate negative impacts are identified, along with any action plan. If negative impacts cannot be mitigated, an objective justification is provided. For positive impacts, considerations are given to how these could be maximised.

The impacts are scored as follows:

- +2 Strong positive
- +1 Positive
- 0 Neutral
- - 1 Negative
- - 2 Strong negative

Age (consider particularly children, under-21s and over-65s)

Potential positive impacts and score

Improvements in air pollution will directly benefit both older and younger Londoners.

Young people and older people are known to be particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of exposure to air pollution. As part of the wider policy framework designed to reduce air pollution concentrations across London, this guidance will disproportionately benefit those most vulnerable to the health impacts of pollution. The evidence suggests that although more vulnerable to the health impacts of air pollution, areas with the highest proportion of both younger and older people tend to be those with the lowest average pollution levels and vice versa.

The AQP approach also considers the growing recognition that traffic noise can have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. In children, noise pollution can impact on school performance, memory and concentration.

By stating that proposals should include detailed consideration of how walking, cycling and public transport routes are not only attractive within the site, but also prioritised over car use and link sensibly to the wider network and important destinations, it asks for developments to support the reduction of car dependence where possible, and by extension the pollution and noise generated by excessive traffic.

The guidance specifically highlights facilities used most by younger or older people (schools, parks and medical facilities) for detailed consideration, with the objective of

ensuring these are located where exposure to air pollution can be minimised. Impact score: **+1**

Potential negative impacts, mitigation and score

Elderly people may be more reliant on private vehicles, or less able to shift to active travel modes, and may be impacted by measures to reduce car use. Elderly people are also more likely to experience mobility issues. Placing buildings further from roads, or residential dwellings on upper floors of buildings, may make these less accessible to elderly people; please also refer to impacts on disability, as elderly people are more likely to be disabled than other age groups.

While those that use private vehicles may be impacted by measures to reduce car use, the AQP approach is clear that applicants should pursue other approaches to connectivity. These can include connecting the masterplan area or development site into the public transport network, as well as producing a travel plan for the area. Using a Healthy Streets Approach, advocated within the guidance, can also make it easier to use mobility scooters, which some elderly people may use. Lastly, for those that can still drive, an increase in electric vehicle charging infrastructure, advocated by the guidance, is likely to make it more convenient to charge electric vehicles Impact score **0**

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2a
- 2b

Disability (consider different types of physical, learning or mental disabilities)

Potential positive impacts and score

The AQP guidance states that development proposals and masterplans should adopt the Healthy Streets Approach and consider the location and function of roads at an early stage, prioritising strategies that enhance access and connectivity for sustainable modes of transport.

Currently 65 per cent of disabled Londoners consider the condition of pavements to be a barrier to walking, and 43 per cent report that obstacles on pavements, such as unnecessary signage, advertising boards and other clutter, are a barrier to walking more.

Those with physical disabilities will likely benefit from the inclusion of wider pathways that would make streets more accessible and pleasant.

The AQP guidance also states that proposals should include detailed consideration of how walking, cycling and public transport routes are not only attractive within the site, but also prioritised over car use.

Well-designed travel routes can have a positive impact for people with mental disabilities. The short periods of walking and cycling associated with active travel have been shown to be beneficial to mental health, improving self-esteem, physical self-worth, mood and mindset, and reducing stress. Walking can reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms, and

those who walk regularly – even for short periods – are significantly more likely to report better mental health than those who walk less.

A development that encourages more sustainable alternatives to car use could also lead to reduced noise pollution from traffic, which can influence sleep, stress, anxiety, blood pressure and mental health. Impact score **+1**

Potential negative impacts, mitigation and score

People with certain physical disabilities may be more reliant on private vehicles. The AQP approach encourages travel routes that reduce dependency on car use. Policies that favour certain modes of active travel, including emphasis on cycle parking and facilities, may also be perceived to favour able-bodied people. Overly restrictive parking and road designs could disadvantage people who rely on private vehicles to move around. Encouragement of residential and other sensitive uses to be located further from the roadside, including on upper floors of a building, could make certain developments less accessible for those who are less mobile.

At the planning application stage, development proposals will be subject to policies within the relevant local plan and London Plan. As a result, development proposals will be assessed against Policies D5 (inclusive design) and D7 (accessible housing), which aim to ensure that developments are designed in a way that meets the needs of all Londoners.

In addition, the London Plan parking policies (Policy T6) sets allowances for Blue Badge holder parking, even within car-free developments. As a result, AQP developments are still obliged to provide disabled persons parking for Blue Badge holders.

Cycle parking policies include provisions for oversized and adapted cycles to cater for people with differing abilities to cycle. Improved public realm and cycle facilities encouraged by the AQP approach may also incentivise cycling in groups where uptake is lower, including disabled people. Impact score **0**

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2a
- 2b

Gender reassignment

No anticipated impacts.

Marriage and civil partnership

No anticipated impacts.

Pregnancy and maternity

Potential positive impacts and score

There is evidence linking increased exposure air pollution with increased risk of miscarriage and stillbirth. There is also growing evidence that certain forms of air pollution

can pass through the placenta and impact the health of the unborn child in the uterus. Reductions in exposure to air pollution would therefore likely have additional benefits for this group.

The guidance specifically highlights facilities used most by pregnant people, such as medical facilities, for detailed consideration. In particular, the guidance advocates that these: are located where exposure to air pollution can be minimised; and can be accessed by low-exposure routes.

AQP also encourages public spaces to be located in areas where there are already low pollutant concentrations, or where the development will create the conditions for low pollutant concentrations.

Safe, open, accessible and inclusive public spaces can provide more opportunities for social interaction. This is likely to have a positive impact on people who share the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity, including parents, as it may help to enhance their mobility.

Please also see the section for “age”, above, for more details on the impact of air pollution on children

The guidance specifically highlights facilities used most by pregnant people, such as medical facilities, for detailed consideration with the objective of ensuring these: are located where exposure to air pollution can be minimised; and can be accessed by low-exposure routes. Impact score **+1**

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2a
- 2b
- 3

Race or ethnicity (consider refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, Gypsies and Travellers)

Potential positive impacts and score

There is little evidence of the susceptibility to the health impacts of air pollution between different ethnic groups. However, there is evidence on the differences in exposure, showing that Black African/Caribbean/British communities are proportionately more likely to live in areas where they are exposed to higher levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). Respondents that identified as “Mixed/Multiple” and “Other” ethnic groups also live in areas where they are exposed to higher levels of NO₂.

Improvements in air pollution are therefore likely to disproportionately benefit ethnic groups who are over-represented in areas of high pollution.

In addition, the inclusion of well-considered green infrastructure within AQP proposals, as recommended by the guidance, can have a positive impact for those of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, who tend to have access to fewer green spaces. Areas that have

almost no Black, Asian or minority ethnic residents have six times as many parks than those where more than 40 per cent of the population are Black, Asian or minority ethnic

There is a strong correlation between areas of high pollution; areas with a high proportion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds; and areas of high deprivation.

Please see the section for “people on low incomes”, below, for more detailed consideration on whether it is possible to further enhance the positive impact. Impact score **+1**

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2a

Religion or belief

No anticipated impacts.

Sex

Potential positive impacts and score

The AQP approach advocates for new public realm and green spaces to be located in areas that are less exposed to pollution. Often this means locating spaces away from roads and nearer homes and public facilities. Providing spaces that are closer to homes, schools and care homes can result in them being overlooked (eyes on the streets), making them feel safer and more inviting.

This will have proportionally greater impact on women, who have reported higher levels of feeling unsafe when in London’s public realm.¹

Potential negative impacts, mitigation and score

The use of green infrastructure as a barrier measure to air pollution, or placement of public space in enclosed areas away from roads (e.g. courtyards), may conversely reduce the perception of natural surveillance and increase the perception of danger for women.

Measures to increase the desirability of active travel, including safe, well-lit walking routes, will generally have a net-positive impact on the perception of danger among vulnerable groups, including women. Major applications will be subject to consultation with the Met Police’s ‘Designing Out Crime’ officers, ensuring that the design of a development does not encourage crime or increase danger. Impact score **0**

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 1

¹ UCL Urban Lab, [Scoping Study – London’s participation in UN Women’s Safer Cities and Safe Public Spaces Programme](#), March 2020 (revised May 2020)

Sexual orientation

No anticipated impacts

People on low incomes

Potential positive impacts and score

The relationship between exposure to air pollution and income is complex. However, people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods are, on average, more likely to be exposed to high levels of air pollution. As a result, improvements in air pollution are likely to disproportionately benefit this group.

Income is a strong predictor of car ownership in inner and outer London, with car ownership generally increasing as household income increases. This would suggest that people on low incomes in those areas could disproportionately benefit from well-designed travel routes for sustainable and public transport, which the guidance states should be considered in detail when taking an AQP approach.

A development that takes an AQP approach to prioritise the inclusion of attractive walking, cycling and public transport routes over car use may also see a reduction in traffic noise, which disproportionately affects disadvantaged people in their homes and workplaces, as well as making walking, cycling and using public transport less pleasant.

Independent assessment of the impact of the suite of air quality policies in the London Environment Strategy (LES) (of which this policy is a part) found that improvements in air quality will be largest in the most polluted areas.

As well as direct improvements to local air quality, the guidance asks developers to consider how their masterplans can enable local access to low emission heat and transport services. These will have direct benefits to local air quality beyond the development boundary. Impact score **+1**

Potential negative impacts, mitigation and score

The AQP approach encourages developers to implement alternative measures to minimise emissions from developments, which may increase capital costs in a number of ways. Examples include alternatively fuelled heating systems, connections to heat networks, and installation of electric vehicle charging facilities. Increased capital costs may be passed on to occupiers.

In addition, such measures may increase ongoing energy costs for future occupants, for example the preference for direct electricity compared with gas for heating and hot water.

The AQP approach encourages adoption of a number of measures early on in the design of proposals. Early incorporation of measures to mitigate air quality impacts can prevent costly 'add-on' mitigation measures being required at a later design stage, such as emissions abatement for energy systems. Measures can also help to minimise expenditure relating to planning obligations, such as emissions off-setting payments required to local planning authorities.

Widespread adoption of alternative technologies (which may have higher capital costs initially) are also often likely to lead to a reduction of costs in the future. Impact score **0**

Relevant PSED aim(s)

- 2a

Overview of equality impacts

This table summarises the scoring of the impacts for each group identified in the previous section.

Category	AQP guidance
Age	+1
Disability	+1
Gender reassignment	No anticipated impacts
Marriage and civil partnership	No anticipated impacts
Pregnancy and maternity	+1
Race	+1
Religion and belief	No anticipated impacts
Sex	0
Sexual orientation	No anticipated impacts
People on low incomes	+1

Consider whether to break the guidance down and introduce further rows in order to make clear different equality impacts for different aspects of the guidance.

Recommendation

Based your assessment, please indicate which course of action you are recommending to decision makers.

Outcome number	Description	Recommended
Outcome one	No major change to the guidance is required: this EqIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken.	Yes
Outcome two	Adjustments to the guidance are required to remove barriers identified by the EqIA or better advance equality.	No
Outcome three	Justify and continue with the guidance despite having identified some potential for negative impacts or missed opportunities to advance equality.	No
Outcome four	Stop, rethink or abandon when the EqIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination	No

Monitoring

Monitoring will take place through the London Plan Annual Monitoring Report and wider monitoring of the Mayor's other strategies, as well as part of reviewing the London Plan.

Appendix A: Evidence Reference and Content

London Plan IIA (including EqIA) and Addendums

Evidence

Age

[Updated Analysis of Air Pollution in London](#), Aether, February 2017

The younger and older populations in London are particularly at risk given their greater susceptibility to the health impacts of air pollution. However, the more vulnerable under-19 and over-65 age groups are not disproportionately exposed to high levels of air pollution concentrations.

[Healthy Streets for London: Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport to create a healthy city](#), Transport for London, February 2017

Noise pollution influences sleep, stress, anxiety, blood pressure and mental health. In children it can impact on school performance, memory and concentration.

[Equality, diversity and inclusion evidence base for London](#), GLA Intelligence, June 2019

Evidence indicates that many London schools are in areas of above-average NO₂ concentration, with around 25 per cent located in areas where average NO₂ exceeds EU limits. This risk appears to be greatest for higher education and 16+ institutions, as well as independent schools and nurseries.

Disability

[Healthy Streets for London: Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport to create a healthy city](#), Transport for London, February 2017

London's streets need to be welcoming to ensure that our communities prosper.

Currently 65 per cent of disabled Londoners consider the condition of pavements to be a barrier to walking, and 43 per cent report that obstacles on pavements, such as unnecessary signage, advertising boards and other clutter, are a barrier to walking more. Furthermore, there is growing recognition of the impacts of traffic noise on health and wellbeing. Noise pollution influences sleep, stress, anxiety, blood pressure and mental health.

The short periods of walking and cycling associated with active travel have also been shown to be beneficial to mental health, improving self-esteem, physical self-worth, mood and mindset, and reducing stress. Walking can reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms, and those who walk regularly – even for short periods – are significantly more likely to report better mental health than those who walk less.

[Equality, diversity and inclusion evidence base for London](#), GLA Intelligence, June 2019

Disability is closely related to age: 13 per cent of the working-age population are disabled, versus 28 per cent of people aged 65 or over.

Gender reassignment

N/A

Marriage or civil partnership

N/A.

Pregnancy and maternity

Air Quality and Health: Reviewing evidence and planning policy in London

(Still to be published – link to be provided soon).

[Equality, diversity and inclusion evidence base for London](#), GLA Intelligence, June 2019

Outside of the home, the nature of London's built environment can support or form barriers to participating in city life. This is particularly relevant to those with pushchairs, who face barriers in accessing many services and buildings because of how buildings, spaces and places are designed and managed

Race

[Air Pollution Exposure in London: Impact of the Environment Strategy: Second Addendum Report: Further Analysis of Ethnicity and Exposure](#), Aether, April 2019

All ethnic groups benefit as a result of policies in the LES and ethnic groups currently most affected by poor air quality (non-White groups) benefit the most. Areas where White people are most likely to live on average see an average reduction in NO2 concentrations of 46 per cent, whereas areas where non-White people are most likely to live see concentrations improve between 48 and 53 per cent.

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Evidence Base for London](#), GLA Intelligence, June 2019

GLA projections estimate that, in 2019, 57 per cent of Londoners have a White British, White Irish or other White ethnicity, with the remaining 43 per cent having a Black, Asian or minority ethnicity.

Availability of green space is lower in more deprived areas and areas with a higher proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, with children in London less likely to visit the natural environment than children elsewhere in England).

Religion or belief

N/A

Sex

[Out of Bounds: Equity in Access to Urban Nature](#), Groundwork May 2021

Girls and young women often report feeling unsafe when spending time in public spaces such as parks and green spaces. A survey conducted by Girlguiding found that 41 per cent of girls aged 11 to 16 feel unsafe when they go outside, rising to 49 per cent of young women aged 17 to 21. Meanwhile, 22 per cent of girls aged 11 to 16 said that they are often stared at and receive unwanted attention when they are outside, increasing to 41 per

cent of young women aged 17 to 21. All these measures were higher for girls and young women who identify as disabled or LGBTQ (Girlguiding, 2020).

Sexual orientation

N/A

People on low incomes

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Evidence Base for London](#), GLA Intelligence, June 2019

Areas of greater deprivation tend to see high levels of air pollution. Research conducted on behalf of the GLA assessed where the population exposed to the highest levels of NO₂ concentration lived. This research found that this group tended to be concentrated in the most deprived parts of London. For example, almost one in five of people exposed to the greatest NO₂ concentrations live in the most deprived areas, despite only 9 per cent of London's population living in those places.

[Travel in London: Report 12](#), Transport for London, 2019

Income is a strong predictor of car ownership in inner and outer London, with car ownership generally increasing as household income increases. Households with higher incomes are also more likely to own two cars.

[Healthy Streets for London: Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport to create a healthy city](#), Transport for London, February 2017

There is growing recognition of the impacts of traffic noise on health and wellbeing. Noise pollution influences sleep, stress, anxiety, blood pressure and mental health. In children it can impact on school performance, memory and concentration. Traffic noise disproportionately affects disadvantaged people in their homes and workplaces, as well as making walking, cycling and using public transport less pleasant.

Gaps in evidence

None identified

Appendix B: Engagement summary

Summary of protected groups engaged and engagement record

N/A