



Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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8th August 2022

Dear Community Planning Team

PIMPERNE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - First Review – Regulation 16 Consultation

Thank you for consulting the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership on the First Review of the Pimperne Neighbourhood Plan.

The AONB Partnership supports the Review.

I do, however, suggest a couple of editorial adjustments.

1. In the interests of clarity, may I suggest that in para 20 the area of Nutford that is within the Dorset AONB is described as the land between the B3082 and the A350 and the River Stour. Nutford Farm is north of the B3082 and within Cranborne Chase AONB.
2. In Policy LC Landscape Character (e) it would be more accurate to refer to this AONB's 'Good Practice Note' rather than 'Fact Sheet'.

It should, of course, be clear to any reader [or Examiner] that within an AONB great weight has to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty, and that Planning Practice Guidance indicates that the AONB designation means it may not be feasible to accommodate all the objectively assessed housing requirement.

For your reference, I attach Annex A which sets out the status and significance of AONBs and this one in particular.

I hope these comments are helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

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For and on behalf of the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership Board

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CC: Pimperne Parish Clerk [REDACTED]

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Annex A

AONB status and significance

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is nationally important. It has been designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this area which straddles two County, two county scale Unitary, and three District councils. It is clear from the Act, subsequent government sponsored reports, and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 that natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage.

It is also recognised that in relation to their landscape characteristics and quality, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are equally important aspects of the nation's heritage assets and environmental capital.

Local government (including planning authorities), Ministers of the Crown, individual councillors, any public body and their employees, statutory undertakers, and holders of public office also have a statutory duty in section 85 of the CRoW Act to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation, namely conserving and enhancing natural beauty, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB.

This [AONB's Management Plan](#) is a statutory document that is approved by the Secretary of State and is adopted by the constituent councils. It sets out the Local Authorities' Objectives and Policies for this nationally significant area, as required by section 89 (2) of the CRoW Act. The national Planning Practice Guidance [Natural Environment paragraph 040, (21.07.2019)] confirms that the AONB and its Management Plan are material considerations in planning.

The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) is clear that the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' does not automatically apply within AONBs, as confirmed by paragraph 11 footnote 7, due to other policies relating to AONBs elsewhere within the Framework. Paragraph 11 (b) indicates that for plan-making being in an AONB 'provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development.' It also indicates in 11 (d) that for decision-making the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas such as AONBs 'provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.'

NPPF paragraph 174 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, which include AONBs, in a manner commensurate with their statutory status. AONBs, along with National Parks, have the highest level of national protection.

Paragraph 175 explains that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and local sites whilst taking a strategic approach to enhancing habitats and green infrastructure, and planning for the enhancement of natural capital across local authority boundaries.

It is explicit (paragraph 176) that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas. Furthermore, the scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited. In addition, development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise impacts on the designated areas.

Paragraph 177 is clear that when considering applications for development planning permission should be refused for major development, other than in exceptional, public interest, circumstances. Footnote 60 also provides for the decision maker to regard development less than the threshold defined in the NPPF glossary as 'major' in the context of an AONB or National Park.

The Planning Practice Guidance, updated 21.07.2019, helpfully includes landscapes, environmental gain, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and their settings in the Natural Environment section. In particular, paragraph 042 highlights the importance of settings, their contributions to natural beauty, and the harm that can be done by poorly located or designed development especially where long views from or to the AONB are identified. Paragraph 041 is clear that NPPF policies for protecting AONBs may mean that it is not possible to meet

International Dark Sky Reserve 2019

objectively assessed needs for development, and any development in an AONB will need to be located and designed in a way that reflects its status as a landscape of the highest quality.

More detailed information in connection with AONB matters can be found on the AONB [website](#) where there is not only the adopted AONB Management Plan but also Position Statements and Good Practice Notes ([Planning Related Publications](#)). In particular when considering construction within the AONB I would draw attention to our [Good Practice Note on Colour in the Countryside](#).

This AONB is, as I expect you know, in one of the darkest parts of Southern England and hence the visibility of stars, and the Milky Way, is a key attribute of this AONB. In October 2019 it was designated the 14th International Dark Sky Reserve in the world. The AONB Partnership is, therefore, very concerned about light pollution. Development that could contribute to light pollution, and hence impact adversely on those dark night skies, has to be modified so that such impacts are eliminated. Building designs, especially those with extensive areas of glazing, may need to be amended. Any external lighting should be explicitly approved by the Local Planning Authority and comply with the [AONB's Position Statement on Light Pollution](#) and the more recent [Good Practice Notes on Good External Lighting](#) and [Paper by Bob Mizon on Light Fittings](#).

Greater details of the landscape, buildings and settlement characteristics can be found in the [Landscape Character Assessment 2003](#) and the [Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley LCA 2018](#). Those documents are available and can be viewed in full on our [website](#).

On the 30th May 2022 the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Board endorsed a Position Statement on Biodiversity Gain, and the Board looks to that guidance having immediate effect. That means that each property should have at least one bird box, one bat box, and one bee brick incorporated into the structure. That level of provision is, nevertheless, fairly basic but is seen by our Board as making an immediate contribution to environmental net gain rather than waiting for the outcome of Government's consultations on national guidance. Our Board's position is that this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should, without delay, make a contribution to environmental net gain whenever there is development approved, at whatever scale, within this AONB.

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