

Report from the Planning Committee

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Summary: The Planning Committee met on 12th September. The following items were discussed:

1. Updates for the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and the AONB Management Plan reviews;
2. Provision of an information leaflet and training for Parish Councils;
3. Provision of affordable housing;
4. A response to the Luton and South Beds Core Strategy consultation;
5. Other Development Plans responses;
6. Feedback on the annual Planning Committee Tour;
7. An update on responses to planning applications,
8. The calendar of meetings for 2008.

Purpose of Report: To bring to the attention of the Board the items considered by the Planning Committee and decisions taken under delegated powers.

Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and AONB Management Plan

1. An update was given in connection with the Buildings Design Guide Review (the 1st edition was published in 1999) and the issue of Supplementary Planning Document status. Despite previous advice there are still differing opinions about whether the guidance can have SPD status.

Information leaflet and Parish Council training

2. It was agreed to publish guidance for parish councils and other community groups on planning matters and the AONB.

3. The leaflet would be delivered as part of a training programme for Parish Councils (also see Item 6 above). The Committee felt that this should take the form of three sessions (Oxon, Bucks and Beds/Herts) on either Saturday mornings or evenings during the week.

Provision of affordable housing

4. The Committee discussed what the Board should be looking for in connection with affordable housing schemes and it was resolved that the best approach would be to treat each case on its merits rather than to produce detailed policies and guidance notes.

5. Some issues were considered to be of vital importance for each case:

- Demonstration of local need.
 - Adequate infrastructure.
 - Best site within the chosen settlement.
 - Best designs and use of local materials.
 - Compliance with the Board's advice and guidance.
6. The Board will need to consider the implications of higher density development and the effects on local character resulting from the loss of back gardens and associated trees.

Luton and South Bedfordshire Core Strategy Issues and Options Response

7. Many of the options proposed would involve significant implications for the AONB – the Luton Northern Bypass and large housing allocations in particular. One aspect that caused significant concern was the mention of providing a country park in the AONB as a development gain for allowing large scale development within the AONB. Strong representations have been sent.

Oxfordshire CC Minerals Site Proposals Issues and Options

8. The Board sought greater recognition of the likely implications for development in close proximity to the AONB, welcomed the exclusion of certain sites that had previously been assessed from within the AONBs, and expressed confusion about the inclusion of various sites within and adjacent to the Chilterns AONB that have been subject to previous consideration.
9. Two annexes detailed various options for sharp sand and gravel and secondary and recycled aggregate sites – many of the possible sites are located close to or within the Chilterns AONB and concern was expressed about the implications for the AONB. The Board has also sought to ensure that adequate policy protection is included for the AONBs within the County.

Buckinghamshire CC Minerals and Waste LDF Waste DPD Preferred Options

10. This response relates to the Council's Waste DPD. The Board has objected to the lack of recognition of, and reference to, the Chilterns AONB and has sought consistency in terms of the terminologies used. The DPD has identified two preferred areas for development within the AONB on existing waste related sites – London Road, Amersham and High Heavens, High Wycombe. The potential uses identified are waste transfer facility, materials recycling facility (at both) and in-vessel composting (only High Heavens).
11. The Board was concerned that certain operations will result in the need for more buildings and has sought to ensure that the full implications of such developments on the AONB are fully addressed. The Board has requested that full account is taken of the AONB and that mention is made of the need to ensure that any development which takes place in the Chilterns AONB should conserve or enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.

Buckinghamshire authorities – Gypsies and Travellers Accommodation Needs Stakeholder Consultation

12. The consultation arose from a partial review of the regional spatial strategy and the need to identify 91 additional permanent pitches in the County to 2011. The responses will feed into the RSS review.
13. A series of questions were asked. The Board strongly agreed with the following statements (amongst others): 'any additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers should be outside the Green Belt'; 'any additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers should be outside the nationally designated Chilterns AONB', and the Board disagreed with the following statement: 'any additional pitches for Gypsies and Travellers should be outside existing built-up areas' as they can as easily be accommodated here as anywhere else.

Aylesbury DC – Core Strategy DPD Preferred Options

14. The Board generally welcomed the recognition given to the importance of the landscape and the Chilterns AONB, but objected to the fact that the AONB was not specifically mentioned as one of the most sensitive landscapes. The Board made specific comments about the settlement hierarchy and the fact that certain settlements are identified (or not) on the key diagram without proper reference to their proximity to the AONB.
15. The Board supported the statement that employment would be provided in the same locations as the housing development, and the inclusion of a policy that will set a framework for identifying all infrastructure requirements and how they will be funded and delivered. The Board welcomed the inclusion of policies and supporting text in connection with affordable housing, house sizes and types and rural exceptions sites.

Aylesbury DC – Aylesbury Allocated Sites DPD Preferred Options

16. The Board expressed concerned that growth to the south of Aylesbury will have implications for the Chilterns AONB which is no more than about 2.5 kilometres away. The Board objected to Policy AAS4 which proposes an employment allocation at College Road North, because it is located over 6 kilometres from the town centre of Aylesbury, and at least 2 kilometres from the nearest part of the proposed southern growth arc. If development was to take place this would lead to a significant increase in car borne commuting.

Bedfordshire CC and Luton BC Waste DPDs Initial Scoping Paper

17. The Board recommended that reference should be made to the AONB Management Plan and any aims, objectives and visions should incorporate the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB.
18. The Board suggested that all sites should preferably avoid the Chilterns AONB and its setting. However, in very special circumstances very limited

local and small scale facilities may be appropriate, provided that the purpose of the AONB is strictly adhered to (conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty).

Buckinghamshire CC Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPD Issues and Options

19. This response relates to the Council's Minerals and Waste Core Strategy. The Board generally welcomed the recognition given to the Chilterns AONB and the fact that the saved policy which addresses the Chilterns AONB will form part of the Core Strategy DPD. The Board welcomed and supported the existing waste and minerals planning objectives, particularly those designed to ensure protection of the natural heritage in Buckinghamshire and support for the Chiltern brick industry.
20. In connection with the issue of supply of aggregate for future growth the Board considered that the County Council should strive to be self-sufficient in meeting aggregate for development in the growth areas, though this should not lead to huge increases in transport of materials. The use of imports that are closer to the areas of development should receive proper consideration. Greater use should also be made of materials recycled within the county where this is appropriate.
21. The Board considered that the Chilterns AONB should be added to the series of sites of national importance as it is designated at the national level and the resultant policy should incorporate text to ensure that any development satisfies the tests outlined in PPS7 and 'conserves and enhances the natural beauty' of the AONB.
22. The Board considered that restoration and after care should be planned to provide benefits to the wider local area. Such benefits should address all aspects including economic, social and environmental.

Three Rivers DC Core Strategy DPD Supplemental Issues and Options

23. The Board noted that at present there are no potential growth locations within the AONB or its setting and, as drafted, the Board had no objection to the locations. However, the issues and options ask the question – 'are there other areas of the district that should be considered as options for broad housing locations?' The Board had no sites to suggest but made the point that the Chilterns AONB should not feature as a potential location for growth (for housing, employment or retail) as it is considered that any development proposed would fail to meet the tests set out in PPS7.

Further detail on the development plans responses can be found in the Committee report which is available on the AONB website. See the following link.

http://www.chilternsaonb.org/downloads/board_meetings/Planning_agenda_papers_120907.pdf

Feedback from the Annual Planning Committee Tour

24. The annual planning committee tour took place on 12th July. Various sites were visited in South Oxfordshire and Wycombe districts looking at successful diversification schemes including the offices at Crowmarsh Battle Barns, the letting accommodation at the Crown Inn at Playhatch, near Caversham and the polytunnels at Grange Farm, Widmer End near High Wycombe. The first two were thought to be very good examples of diversification, though the polytunnels at Grange Farm were considered to be a significant discordant feature (in line with the Board's objection to the original planning application).

Planning applications update

25. In the year since 1st April 2007 details of 90 planning applications or appeals have been brought to the attention of, or requested by, the Planning Officer. Responses have been submitted to 89, 23 of which were the subject of formal representations (21 objections). At the time of writing 11 of these applications have been determined (or have been withdrawn) and all are in line with the Board's comments.

Recommendations

1. **The Board notes the report from the Planning Committee**
2. **The Board considers what additional issues, if any, it should consider in connection with the provision of affordable housing schemes.**