

Decision details

Approval of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2014-19

Decision Maker: Director

Decision status: Recommendations Approved

Is Key decision?: Yes

Is subject to call in?: No

Decision:

That the [Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019](#) is endorsed as a material consideration in the exercise of the Council's planning powers.

Reasons for the decision:

The preparation of a Management Plan for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) is a statutory requirement of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000. It is intended to guide the activities of all who live and work in the AONB to help conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty.

Government guidance^[1] states that planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment. Local planning authorities should therefore have regard to AONB management plans because these documents demonstrate partnership working and delivery of designation objectives. AONB management plans do not form part of the statutory development plan but can help to set the strategic context for development by providing evidence and principles for development within the AONB.

These principles should be taken account of in local planning authorities' local plans and any neighbourhood plans in AONB areas. AONB Management Plans may also be material considerations in making decisions on individual planning applications.

The plan for the Chilterns is prepared on behalf of this council and the other constituent local authorities by the Chilterns Conservation Board. We have a representative on the Conservation Board and currently provide funding for their activities along with the other constituent local authorities and Natural England.

Following adoption of the Management Plan by the Conservation Board in March 2014 they have requested that the Council endorse the document as a material consideration in the exercise of its planning powers.

The management plan sets out a vision for the Chilterns and is split into six cross-cutting themes designed to better focus the delivery of objectives. The six cross-cutting themes of the Management Plan are – climate change; social inclusion; health and well-being; lifelong learning; ecosystems services and environmental sustainability.

Each of these themes are addressed in a series of chapters which are grouped under three sections: 'Conserving and enhancing natural beauty'; 'Understanding and Enjoying' and 'Social and economic well-being'; which are based on the Board's statutory purposes. Each section details: broad aims, special qualities, key issues and a series of policies.

Planning and development is one of six areas the plan covers under conserving and enhancing natural beauty, alongside landscape, farming, biodiversity, water environment and the historic environment.

The plan informs public bodies of the means by which they can demonstrate compliance with their statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of designation of the AONB when undertaking their functions.

The plan policies are designed to be delivered by a wide range of stakeholders and partners in the AONB. They help secure a consistent approach across the Chilterns and a way to demonstrate joint work under the Duty to Cooperate. The Chilterns Conservation Board co-ordinates the monitoring and delivery of the plan policies and are directly responsible for the delivery of certain work areas.

[1] Planning Practice Guidance – Does planning need to take account of management plans for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty? Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 8-004-20140306

Alternative options considered:

1. Adopting the plan as a Supplementary Planning Document – not recommended as although it has been subject to consultation and Strategic Environmental Assessment, this would give the plan enhanced planning weight, and the management plan covers a wider remit than planning.
2. Not endorsing the plan – not recommended because failure to endorse the plan would mean it has less weight as a material consideration when assessing planning applications and in shaping new local plan and neighbourhood plan policies. Endorsing the plan demonstrates compliance with statutory duties and conforms to the Government's Planning Practice Guidance.

Interests and Nature of Interests Declared:

None.

Publication date: 26/07/2016

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