

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE ON POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

BASIC AND SUPPLEMENTARY OPTIONS

Background

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has been established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this nationally important area which straddles three County, one Unitary and five 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. 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 designated area. The national Planning Practice Guidance [Natural Environment paragraph 004] confirms that the AONB and its Management Plan are material considerations in planning.

Current Situation

Currently most pre-application proposals are provided by the AONB to the Local Planning Authority when they have received a formal request from a potential developer. When approached by a potential developer directly for a pre-application site visit or meeting, the AONB's Landscape and Planning Advisor recommends, in the interests of good use of time and to ensure the parties hear what each other says, that a representative of the planning authority is present. Quite often proposals are quite fluid, at their early stages of formulation, and do not have an explicit proposal to respond to formally.

Options

The Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership is committed to providing pre-application advice. That advice can help refine proposals or avoid expenditure on schemes that are unlikely to comply with objectives and policies. However, with limited resources that advice cannot be open ended, and those that would like more than the currently free single site visit, letter, or meeting will have to pay for the extra commitment. This is seen as being fair and continuing to provide a free basic service whilst also making provision for those that wish to have more detailed or extensive advice or information.

Supplementary Pre-application Consultation Process

1.0 Why?

1.1 The need for a more structured pre-application consultation process has arisen in response to increased requests to the Cranborne Chase AONB Unit to review and provide technical advice on landscape issues and impacts of planning proposals of differing scales and types.

1.2 The formalisation of the process will ensure that a fair, free and basic service continues whilst the costs in officer time can be recouped for additional advice. It will mean that a formal and consistent response mechanism is in place.

1.3 This process will provide greater clarity for developers in that it enables the advice of the Cranborne Chase AONB Unit to be given prior to a formal application (or even a pre-application) to the Local Planning Authority. That can avoid issues being identified at the planning application stage when there are greater time constraints and costs involved in resolving those issues, avoiding adverse impacts, providing mitigation or negotiating compensation for adverse impacts that are not capable of being mitigated.

1.4 The process also ensures that there is a consistent approach to applying the policies of the Cranborne Chase AONB. In particular, advising on development proposals to ensure landscape assessment, site selection, design, layout and landscaping are all in keeping with the policies of the AONB Partnership's Management Plan.

1.5 Following a stated process when receiving direct queries from developers mirrors the approach that is taken when receiving requests from the LPAs within the Partnership as part of their formal pre-application process.

2.0 What is required?

2.1 When seeking advice beyond the basic, the Cranborne Chase AONB will require sufficient information to ensure that officers can scope the level of work required to provide an informed response. Whether this can be desk based or require additional site visits and meetings to clarify certain aspects of a proposed scheme will be discussed and clarified.

2.2 The following is likely to be requested in order for the formal process to be undertaken;

- A location plan of the site, including an outline denoting its extent
- A statement/letter confirming the proposed development, including a full description of all works (proposed buildings, roads, uses and any associated infrastructure such as SUDS, hard and soft landscaping)
- Any initial elevations, layouts and street scenes
- Any visual analysis work (photographs, LVIA or desk studies on landscape character)
- Confirmation of proposed timeline for submission of an application to the LPA and confirmation of any pre-application advice that has been received from the LPA.

3.0 What action is to be undertaken by Cranborne Chase AONB Unit?

3.1 The pre-application enquiry will be listed onto the pre-application log and assigned to the Landscape and Planning Advisor, or other officer if appropriate.

3.2 The officer will then review the level of information submitted and acknowledge receipt. If there is insufficient information to begin an initial assessment the officer shall request further information from the enquirer.

3.3 The initial assessment will confirm what level of work will be required to provide a response and in what timeframe that response is likely to be provided. This will then be confirmed to the developer along with the relevant fee to be charged (see Fee Schedule).

3.4 Once the written agreement to the fee and level of response has been received from the enquirer the officer will assess the pre-application consultation submission and provide a response.*

* Note: The officer will also be responsible for arranging meetings, site visits and establishing a timeline for response. All responses shall be via the standard letter template so as to ensure consistency between all officers in their assessment and matters to be covered in their responses.

4.0 Pre-application assessment considerations

4.1 As with formal planning application consultations officers will need to consider the type of application in terms of its scale (major or minor) and its likely outputs.

4.2 The Cranborne Chase AONB would normally consider a range of site and landscape specific issues in the assessment of schemes being developed through formal pre-applications. These include, but are not limited to the following;

- a. What landscape character assessment has helped to inform siting, scale, design, layout and landscaping?
- b. Has the site been tested on a sequential basis to establish the best location for the proposal?
- c. What is the pattern of development in the locality and how does this influence or is influenced by the landscape?
- d. What local landscape historical features help define the landscape (enclosure, windswept sculpted tree forms, rough pasture, ridge top views, secluded valleys, historic patterns of settlement, lack of visible signs of modern infrastructure)?
- e. Is the proposed development of a scale that is in keeping with the pattern of settlement or landscape constraints that it would be situated within or adjacent to?
- f. Are there aspects of the development that could generate significant enhancements to the landscape?
- g. From what public viewpoints is the site visible and how would these be affected?
- h. Are there wider views of the landscape that form an important aspect of how it is perceived?
- i. Is the topography of the site capable of enabling mitigating works such as digging in and landscaping/ boundary treatment? Would this in itself be in keeping with the established landform pattern for the wider area?
- j. Has an LVIA process identified the above, and if none has been undertaken whether or not one should be provided?
- k. What design and layout would minimise impact and help to conserve features of the landscape (e.g. consider the use of softer landscaping for parking and turning areas, responding to local vernacular and scale of buildings, preserve historic hedges and boundaries, seek meaningful mitigation).

5.0 Concluding the process

5.1 At the end of the assessment the Cranborne Chase AONB will provide its opinion on the proposal in an agreed manner. This may be simply a meeting, the review of a meeting note, or via a formal letter (this includes email where appropriate).

5.2 Where a written response is agreed as part of the package the letter shall itemise what information was submitted and reviewed.



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5.3 Confirmation of the impacts and any avoidance or mitigation will be clearly identified within the standard response template and a conclusion of the scheme's overall acceptability will be given.

5.4 Officers are to ensure that the enquirer is aware that the advice given is officer opinion and not necessarily representative of all members of the AONB Partnership. The following standard caveat shall be added to all formal responses for clarity;

Standard caveat for use when providing written advice:

"The advice given in this pre-application response is provided on the basis of the information submitted and on the basis of existing known policy. The advice is officer opinion only and is provided without prejudice to any future consultation response made by the AONB Partnership on planning applications for this proposed development or others differing in nature on this site."

Cranborne Chase AONB Unit Supplementary Pre-application Consultation Process Fee Schedule

A The hourly rate, which includes team support for Chartered level (or equivalent) staff

B Expenses:

Travel: Car at HMRC rate (currently 45p per mile)

Public transport and parking @ cost

Printing / materials / postage @ cost + 2.5%

Travelling time: @ 50% of the hourly charge

C The agreed time committed to the proposal / tasks associated with the proposal.

Fee = agreed time hourly rate (A) x agreed time (C) plus expenses (B).

VAT is an additional charge

Payment should be made payable to Wiltshire Council (Cranborne Chase AONB)