

***Cranborne Chase
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty***



POSITION STATEMENT

Number 6

GOOD ENOUGH TO APPROVE IN AN AONB

Aim

This AONB is keen to see planning applications for appropriate development proposals processed speedily. Applicants are key to achieving this; submitting an appropriate proposal with clear plans and supporting documents, in a satisfactory location with designs and materials that blend and integrate with the landscape can go a long way to facilitating a timely and positive decision.

Background

However, the general quality of planning applications for proposals within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty indicates that there is still a significant number of applicants and agents who do not fully appreciate that AONBs are nationally designated areas of especially fine landscape of national importance. 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; that needs to be acknowledged and understood when considering development proposals within the AONB or its setting. An appreciation of the purposes of AONB designation, namely conserving and enhancing natural beauty, can help when contemplating the type, location, form, and scale of development proposals.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has been established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this area. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 reiterates the purpose and designation procedures for AONBs as well as making provision for national funding of the local management of these national resources. Natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage, and it is also recognised that the historic environment is particularly significant in this AONB.

It is also important to remember that the AONB Management Plan, and Planning Inspectorate decisions, recognise that development proposals, and the consideration of applications for development, adjacent to or within close

proximity of the AONB's boundary also have to have regard for the landscape and visual impacts.

Quite simply the implications are that any development proposals in or near an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should integrate with the landscape in terms of location, position, and mass within both the landscape and site. Detailed matters, such as scale, form, dimensions, colours and materials, as well as the landscape treatment of the proposals, need to be carefully considered and thought through. They should be explicitly set out in a clear and understandable way if applications are to be processed expeditiously, without protracted requests for clarification or additional information, and gain approval.

Resources to aid understanding

Proposing developments [and land use or management changes] in an AONB involves an understanding of the components of landscapes and the holistic nature of the concept of landscape. This AONB's [Landscape Character Assessment](#) and the abbreviated version, [Planning and the AONB – Sustaining Landscape Character](#) are accessible on our web site www.cwwdaonb.org.uk.

They set out the details of the eight Landscape Types and the fifteen Landscape Character Areas identified for this AONB. There is also information about settlement types and landscape management issues.

The [Historic Landscape Character](#) of this AONB, and ways in which the historic landscape environment can be conserved and enhanced, are also available on the website. The [Historic Environment Action Plans](#) consider themes and locations to take into account. They provide relevant guidance and references to aid comprehension.

The sensitivity of an area or location to change is especially important when contemplating development proposals. The [AONB's Landscape Sensitivity Study \(2007\)](#) provides background information and guidance on this vital matter.

[Tranquillity](#) is a special attribute of this AONB. In addition to its role in the Management Plan it has also been the subject of special reports by the Campaign to Protect Rural England ([Tranquil Places](#)) and this AONB team.

In addition to the Core Strategy / Local Plan policies of the local planning authorities, the [AONB Management Plan](#) is a statutorily required document that has been approved by the Secretary of State and adopted by all the Local Authorities of the AONB. It is also available on the web site. It sets out agreed policies and actions to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of this AONB, whilst seeking to sustain a living and working countryside.

As agreed in the Management Plan, the AONB Partnership produces Position Statements and Good Practice Notes to help applicants; they are listed at the end of this document.

Many of our local planning authorities provide guidance on design and materials that are particularly suitable for their areas. Examples are:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-householders-design-guide-final.pdf>

http://www3.hants.gov.uk/4_guidlines.pdf

https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/410698/landscape_design_-_a_guide_to_good_practice.pdf

https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/411595/landscape_design_guide_-_addendum.pdf

<https://www.dorsetforyou.com/article/325228/Conservation-and-design-guidance-for-East-Dorset>

Focussing on the matters that matter

It is, therefore, important that those preparing development proposals, and also those receiving and assessing them, appreciate fully the need for proposals to respect all AONB issues, to be clear and fully detailed, and to be of very high quality in terms of location, design, materials, and sustainability. There are some provisions in the legislation to enable the Local Planning Authorities to require a higher standard of planning application in AONBs, such as Full Applications [not Outline ones] and Design and Access Statements. Nevertheless, there can still be considerable variation in both the concept and details of development proposals.

In a similar way that proposals affecting Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas require specialist professional expertise and input, most proposals in or near an AONB are likely to require a professional landscape and visual impact appraisal. Carried out by a chartered landscape architect that appraisal will inform the evolution of the proposals, the avoidance and mitigation of impacts, the provision of any compensation, and the consideration of the formal application.

It is a matter of considerable concern to this AONB that all too frequently 'Planning, Design and Access Statements' quote out of date policy guidance and documents. They also fail to focus on crucial matters and present arguments for their proposal based on assertions rather than verifiable evidence or justified and reasoned professional judgements. Similarly, submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisals are all too frequently put forward as justifications of the proposals after they have been located and designed, rather than being undertaken at an early stage to inform those design processes.

There also appears to be confusion between Landscape Character Appraisals (which are merely descriptions) and Landscape Impact Appraisals. However, these landscape reports all too frequently fill out many pages with the repetition of extracts from published landscape character studies rather than focussing on the description and evaluation of the locality and the landscape context. Furthermore, assertions about impacts (or the lack of them) are rarely based on detailed reasoning. The importance of sequentially identifying the impacts (following a critical assessment of the proposals), setting out which, if any, of the impacts can be avoided (and how), and then progressing to detailing mitigation proposals (with appropriate plans and specifications) seems, unfortunately, to be infrequently acknowledged.

In line with the AONB Management Plan policy PT2 this Partnership is keen to encourage and assist with the development of consistent policies for AONB matters across the area. To that end, Core Strategies and Local Plans are including a policy (such as Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy 51) which requires development proposals within or affecting the AONB to demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the AONB Management Plan. Complying with this type of policy means that not only should the applicant be aware of the AONB Management Plan but they should also set out clearly and explicitly how their proposals take AONB matters into account.

Advice

The AONB is very keen to ensure that where development proposals are likely to be acceptable in policy terms the actual proposals are of a high quality appropriate for, and relevant to, nationally important and national designated landscapes. In order to facilitate the processing of appropriate development proposals applications should aspire to, and provide, schemes and their associated documentation that are 'Good Enough to Approve'.

Local Planning Authorities have pre-application advice schemes, and using these can highlight potential difficulties and facilitate the processing of a formal application. The AONB also provides basic pre-application advice with an additional, chargeable, service for those who wish to have more detailed or extensive advice or have more substantial or complex development proposals.

The AONB Partnership, therefore, recommends that

- a) owners, developers, and consultants have detailed pre-application discussions with the relevant local planning authority, and the AONB team,
- b) applicants should familiarise themselves with this AONB's Management Plan, Position Statements and Good Practice Notes in order that they can incorporate that knowledge into their planning applications,
- c) proposals demonstrably take full account of the landscape character,
- d) proposals integrate with the AONB landscape,

- e) the potential location and scale within the landscape and the site is explicitly and demonstrably considered along with issues of scale, form, and materials,
- f) local planning authorities make clear in their guidance to applicants that applications for development in the AONB will have to be not only in accordance with policies but also to be fully detailed to a high standard,
- g) local planning authorities should critically appraise applications in relation to the AONB and not register those that do not cover landscape issues or do not achieve a high standard, and
- h) the AONB team should work with the LPAs wherever feasible to assist in achieving proposals that meet the 'Good Enough to Approve' objective.

At its meeting on 6th April 2016 the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership Panel endorsed this Position Statement and stated:

The Partnership Panel urges all owners, developers, consultants, and Local Planning Authorities to recognise and adopt the 'Good Enough to Approve' approach for the AONB as set out in the Position Statement.

ANNEX 1

Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Position Statements and Fact / Good Practice Sheets Available on the AONB website

POSITION STATEMENTS

[Position Statement 1 - Light Pollution](#) (PDF, 75Kb)

[Position Statement 2 - Historic Parks & Gardens](#) (PDF, 90Kb)

[Position Statement 3 - Relevance of the Setting for AONB](#) (PDF, 89Kb)

[Position Statement 4 - Historic Landscape Characterisation](#) (PDF, 30Kb)

[Position Statement 5 - Renewable Energy](#) (PDF, 75Kb)

[Position Statement 6 – Good Enough to Approve](#)

[Position Statement 7 – Affordable Parking](#)

[Position Statement 8 – Farm Diversification \(Spring 2016\)](#)

FACT SHEETS

[Fact Sheet 1 - Section 85 Factsheet & Good Practice](#) (PDF, 26Kb)

[Fact Sheet 2 - Local Plan, LDF & Good Practice](#) (PDF, 29Kb)

[Fact Sheet 3 - European Landscape Convention Fact Sheet & Good Practice](#) (PDF, 33Kb)

[Fact Sheet 4 - Historic Landscape Characterisation Fact Sheet & Good Practice](#) (PDF, 21Kb)

[Fact Sheet 6 - Colour and Integrating developments into the Landscape](#) (PDF, 60Kb)

[Fact Sheet 7 – Good External Lighting Fact Sheet and Good Practice Note](#)

[Fact Sheet 8 – New Agricultural Buildings Fact Sheet and Good Practice Note](#)

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