

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT FOR THE AONB

Responsible Officer Phil Holden, AONB Partnership Manager
e-mail: phil.holden@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254741

Summary

This paper proposes a planning policy Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Shropshire Hills AONB.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to comment on the proposal and rationale.

Background

Local authorities are required to give special consideration to AONBs, and doing so in a DPD specifically for the AONB area has the potential to reduce conflict and the large workload associated with for example contentious site allocations and major planning casework. A DPD for the Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB has recently been adopted by Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland Council, and this is being seen as an example of best practice for planning policy in AONBs.

Why produce a Shropshire Hills AONB DPD?

- **To provide better protection for the AONB landscape from major developments.**

Controversial major developments have included major housing schemes, large multiple agricultural buildings and industrial scale renewable energy installations. Shropshire Council's poor past record on protecting the AONB from major development has been highlighted in a national report. The Glover Review is recommending strengthening of the duty of local authorities with regard to AONBs. The AONB landscape is increasingly being understood and valued as an asset to the economy which can be undermined by inappropriate development. A DPD led by capacity of the landscape rather than the 'need' for development would firm up a new approach which regards the AONB positively rather than as a constraint. The document can also be positive about the kinds of development which actively support the AONB purposes of conserving and enhancing the landscape.

- **To strengthen the policy approach within the AONB on key areas of development:**

- Housing – A DPD provides the opportunity for an approach to housing in the AONB which is led by capacity of the landscape, local need and community wishes. There is

potential to justify a higher proportion of affordable housing within developments, and at lower size thresholds of development (the Arnside & Silverdale DPD has a policy of 50% affordable for all developments of two or more houses).

- Agricultural development – New agricultural policy and developing schemes are pushing towards more support for environmental and public benefits. This positive shift for land management should not be undermined by agricultural developments which fall in the scope of planning. Farm businesses need to be able to develop, but in harmony with the landscape and with other sectors such as the visitor economy.
 - Renewable energy – With the Climate Emergency and Zero Carbon targets the need for renewable energy is greater than ever, and ways to accommodate this sensitively in the AONB landscape at appropriate scales are needed to avoid conflict.
 - Tourism – Valuing the landscape more for visitors and a rise in staycations are already increasing numbers and will continue to do so. Tourism developments also need not to devalue the landscape resource on which they depend.
- **To improve the quality of smaller developments (e.g. in design terms), which cumulatively affect the quality and character of the AONB.**

Landscape Guidance is being prepared at present and the need for better design guidance has been identified. These could be incorporated into or linked with the DPD.

List of Background Papers

Arnside & Silverdale AONB DPD at <https://www.arnsidesilverdaleaonb.org.uk/aonb-development-plan-document-dpd-adopted/> and case study for NAAONB, available on request.

National Trust 2015 report 'AONBs and Development'

<https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/national-trust-areas-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-and-development.pdf>

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

None