

AONBs role on housing and transport in their areas

Context

The primary purpose of AONB designation, as defined in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. The term 'natural beauty' covers a wide range of issues, including landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features, and the rich history of human settlement over the ages. As such, AONBs are dynamic, living landscapes whose future depends on vibrant and diverse local communities. Appropriate sustainable development is essential, therefore, for these cherished places to continue to thrive and be used and enjoyed by current and future generations.

The role AONBs play in development in their areas

Housing allocation and development in AONBs is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) through their development planning and development control powers. AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards, however, are well placed to work with LPAs to help address housing and other development needs in their areas through:

- their statutory Management Plans
- their convening powers
- the broad range of specialist expertise available within their Teams
- understanding their local landscapes (its character, sensitivities and capacity for accommodating change)
- awareness of the key pressures for change, such as, demographic changes and the needs of local communities, the requirements of visitors, and changes to farming, land management practices and the rural economy.

Specifically, AONBs are helping in the following ways.

What	How	Example	Why (How AONB activities support the proposals in Fixing our Broken Housing Market)
Powers to Convene	By using their powers to convene, AONBs work collaboratively with developers, architects, government, local communities and Local Planning Authorities to help address local housing and other development needs.	<p>The theme of the Norfolk Coast Partnership Annual Conference 2017 was “Developing Solutions” where lead planning officers, developers, architects and parish councillors shared a range of perspectives on the challenges facing the coast, including a lack of meaningful involvement of local people in planning; the ever-growing effects of climate change; critically low levels of affordable housing; no new public stock being built; and finally a marked and linked increase in luxury developments – often replacing modest former dwellings.</p> <p>The Cornwall AONB Partnership is working closely with a number of AONB Parishes on their Neighbourhood Plans, using tools such as Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment to make sure that new housing is directed to those areas that can best accommodate it on landscape grounds.</p>	By facilitating conversations between the key actors and building on the success of neighbourhood planning, AONBs are ensuring that communities have a meaningful involvement in shaping development in their areas (<i>Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places</i>).
Management Plans	<p>AONB Management Plans assist Local Planning Authorities by identifying what is special about these protected landscapes, to ensure that development delivers the right homes in the right places and meets the core purpose of AONB designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty.</p> <p>The Plans do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying all of the key issues that are 	The High Weald AONB Management Plan is a 20 year strategy (reviewed every five years) which identifies the natural beauty of the High Weald in a Statement of Significance. This includes the key landscape components which make the AONB special and different to any other landscape. The Plan then sets objectives for each component and identifies actions that would contribute to conserving and enhancing that part of the landscape.	AONB Management Plans give Local Planning Authorities a clear steer of the likely key local issues, and the potential impact and benefits of new development. This, in turn, improves transparency, clarity and understanding for developers which helps to speed up the decision-making process. (<i>Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places</i>).

	<p>likely to impact on the core purpose of the AONB designation to conserve and enhance natural beauty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting out objectives and policies that assist decision-makers with assessing proposed development and ensuring that it conserves and enhances the AONB.. • Monitoring impacts on the AONB and reviewing the Management Plan every five years. 	<p>As part of an advice note on planning matters, the Partnership has produced a template which developers are encouraged to submit with their planning applications which shows how their proposal performs against these objectives and actions. This provides a clear audit of what impacts and potential benefits the development would bring to the AONB and assists the LPA to meet its CROW Act Section 85 duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing the AONB when making decisions that affect it.</p> <p>Cornwall AONB Management Plan provides criteria to assist their local planning authority in defining “major developments in the AONB”.</p>	
Advice Notes / Supplementary Planning Documents	<p>Most AONB partnerships produce Planning Advice Notes either as separate documents or as part of their Management Plan. Where appropriate, these may be adopted by the LPAs as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).</p>	<p>The North Pennines AONB Partnership collaborated with the five planning authorities within the North Pennines (Cumbria County Council, Durham County Council, Northumberland County Council, Eden District Council and Carlisle City Council) to produce Planning Guidelines SPD. Using the evidence base taken from the North Pennines AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 combined with national and regional guidance and external technical documents, the guidelines aim to ensure consistent and high quality land use and planning decisions across the whole AONB in order to conserve this unique landscape.</p>	<p>By producing thorough and evidenced Planning Guidelines, AONBs are helping the decision-making process to drive up the quality and character of new development (<i>Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places</i>).</p>
Achieving well-designed places	<p>In order to achieve the highest design standards expected for a nationally protected landscape, AONB Partnerships have produced Design Guidance for housing development that</p>	<p>The Blackdown Hills AONB Design Guide for Houses aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the quality of the 	<p>The range of tools produced by AONBs, such as, Design Guides, Position Statements, Fact Sheets, and Good Practice Notes help to drive up the</p>

	<p>explains how housing layouts and buildings can be designed in a way that reinforces local distinctiveness and respects the landscape, settlement character and special qualities of the AONB. These can also be adopted by the LPAs as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).</p>	<p>traditional built character of the Blackdown Hills AONB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help identify and protect the distinctive traditional built character of the Blackdown Hills AONB and promote local identity. • Inspire high quality design in new developments which respect the traditional built character and wider landscape of the AONB. • Provide a co-ordinated and integrated approach to design advice throughout the AONB. • Promote sustainability in design and use of resources, particularly locally produced building materials. <p>Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership has produced a series of Position Statements, Fact Sheets and Good Practice Notes on a wide range of topics to encourage sympathetic development within the AONB, including lighting and light pollution, farm diversification, renewable energy, and agricultural buildings.</p>	<p>quality and character of new development (<i>Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places</i>).</p>
<p>AONB-wide Development Plans</p>	<p>An AONB-wide Development Plan can provide a strategic planning approach to development within AONBs which helps to LPAs to meet their duty to cooperate and apply consistent policies to the AONB where this comes within the administration of multiple LPAs. Like all Development Plans this would be subject to independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate and all planning applications would be required to be determined in accordance with it unless material</p>	<p>Arnside and Silverdale AONB is working with Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council to adopt a dedicated Development Plan Document (DPD) for the AONB – the first of its kind in the country. The AONB DPD is part of the two authorities’ Local Plans which sets out a landscape capacity-led policy approach to development management. It includes specific development management policies for the AONB and a limited number of small-scale</p>	<p>AONB-wide Development Plans would improve consistency, transparency, clarity and understanding for developers which helps to speed up the decision-making process. (<i>Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places</i>).</p>

	considerations indicated otherwise.	land allocations where housing or employment development has been found to be appropriate (following a rigorous site assessment process including a landscape and visual amenity assessment). It also designates open spaces within settlements that make a significant contribution to their character (again identified through an assessment process), for protection from development. Any new development should seek to deliver enhancements to the landscape, biodiversity and settlement character wherever possible. The DPD stipulates at least 50% affordable housing on allocated and windfall sites.	
Producing Evidence to Inform Plan-Making and Decision-taking	AONB Partnerships commission and produce evidence about their areas that can inform Local and Neighbourhood Plans and be material considerations for planning applications.	Most AONB Partnerships have produced Landscape Character Assessments of their areas that provide a framework for developing a shared understanding of the current character of each AONB's landscapes and its future management needs. These are reference documents for everyone with an interest in the future planning and management of the AONB including developers, architects and local communities. For ease of use and visualisation, these are often available as online mapping tools, for example, Forest of Bowland AONB .	Evidence such as Landscape Character Assessments help provide clarity for communities, developers and Local Planning Authorities where development in AONBs might take place without causing harm to their natural beauty (<i>Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places</i>).
Providing Advice on Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and Planning Applications	AONB Partnerships provide support and advice to Local Planning Authorities and developers on development matters which would, by reason of its scale or nature or the location of the land, be of major importance/ significance in the context of its impact on the protected landscape.	One of the practical ways that AONB Partnerships support their Local Planning authorities is by advising on the landscape and environmental impacts of individual applications within their areas. In the last decade this role has become increasingly significant as many LPAs have shed fully qualified and experienced landscape, ecological and archaeological staff as part of	Informed and timely specialist inputs by AONB officers are smoothing the planning process, identifying issues at an early stage, and helping to avoid unnecessary delays (<i>Step 2: Building homes faster</i>).

		<p>austerity cuts. AONBs have also developed their skills in GIS and visualisation tools to inform their judgements on the likely landscape and environmental impacts of development proposals.</p>	
<p>Facilitating the delivery of affordable housing for local people</p>	<p>AONBs are sensitive to the housing requirements of different groups in their communities, and the need for innovative solutions. A frequent ambition is ensuring that sufficient, affordable, housing stock is available to local people, particularly those in the land-based sectors, so that they can continue to contribute to thriving AONBs that are managed appropriately.</p>	<p>In 2005 the Norfolk Coast AONB Partnership commissioned a study of affordable housing provision in the AONB to respond to one of the actions set out in its Management Plan. The objectives of the study were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the specific issues and constraints for affordable housing which reflect its AONB status; • Identify possible solutions to the provision of affordable housing (and where further consideration may be needed); • Provide an assessment of the scale and nature of the affordable housing issues within the AONB. <p>Cornwall AONB Partnership's Management Plan (Policy VC7) recognises the need to provide sufficient affordable housing within the AONB to meet the needs of local communities , and to tie-in the affordables in perpetuity.</p> <p>The High Weald AONB Unit commissioned a study into Sustainable Housing which demonstrated how affordable housing could be built of local materials in a design which made efficient use of land and was appropriate to the AONB landscape. It has also co-hosted a workshop to assist</p>	<p>AONBs are attuned to local housing issues, such as, second homes and the lack of affordable housing, and adopt policies and initiatives to tackle them so that the needs of current and future local populations can be met (<i>Step 4: Helping people now</i>).</p>

		Community Land Trusts with developing affordable housing schemes within the AONB.	
Building thriving rural communities	By delivering rural development and diversification programmes and initiatives, AONBs are catalysts for innovative rural and tourism development, as well as green energy growth - supporting businesses and jobs.	<p>The Cotswolds AONB Conservation Board provides a range of funding support to those with responsibility for managing and caring for the special features of the Cotswolds, for example, Cotswolds LEADER Programme, Cotswolds AONB Sustainable Development Fund.</p> <p>A 2007 study of the key effects of the horseracing industry on the North Wessex Downs AONB highlighted its significant contribution to the regional and local economies, and recommended a number of measures to support the industry. Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership's Sustainable Rural Tourism Project is working in partnership with a range of visitor related businesses and key organisations to encourage sustainable tourism to the Nadder Valley area, benefitting rural businesses and the local economy as a whole.</p> <p>In 2016 South Devon AONB hosted the biggest renewable energy event in the South West, with over 100 companies from the sector exhibiting and showcasing their latest products.</p>	By delivering rural development and diversification programmes, AONBs are encouraging their rural communities to grow and sustaining the lifeblood of their special landscapes (<i>Step 1: Planning for the right homes in the right places</i>).
Promoting sustainable transport	<p>AONBs work with transport planners, highways engineers and community groups from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all management of, and improvements to, roads enhances the 	Since 2004 Dorset and East Devon AONB Partnerships have been working with Devon and Dorset County Councils to develop an integrated approach to sustainable transport across the Jurassic Coast . Advice for visitors includes ways to Leave the Car Behind .	Improves neighbourhoods by contributing to better planning for transport use and infrastructure, integrated design schemes, and better visitor management (<i>Step 4: Helping people now</i>).

	<p>distinctive character of the area and reduces the effects of transport on tranquillity, natural beauty and the natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport use. • Make sure that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of urban regeneration schemes, and contribute to making high quality places. 	<p>Dorset AONB Partnership has agreed a Rural Roads Protocol with Dorset County Council to use the local setting and distinctiveness of the rural environment to guide road management decisions in the AONB</p> <p>In 2010 the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership commissioned a Sustainable Transport and Access Study for the Wrekin Forest to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise existing transport provision to the Wrekin Forest. • Discuss the issues and options previously reported or raised with us by stakeholders. • Review a number of options that might be put forward to improve sustainable transport access. <p>The Wye Valley AONB Sustainable Development Fund offers financial support to community groups for transport projects to reduce car use and improve health by increased activity</p>	
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Ways in which the AONB offer on housing and transport in their areas can be further improved

- Ensure that the current refresh of AONB Management Plans identifies issues and opportunities for conserving and enhancing the AONB including supporting the delivery of appropriate housing to meet local needs which will contribute to delivering the Government's ambitions for fixing the broken housing market.
- Encourage the production of dedicated Development Plan documents for AONBs where appropriate, learning from the lessons of the Arnside and Silverdale Development Plan.
- Offer support, where appropriate, to neighbourhood planning groups.
- Using the provision set out in Article 18, Schedule 4 of the Development Management Procedure Order (DMPO) 2015 seek AONB partnerships statutory consultee status for Town and Country planning matters.
- Ensure that the advice available within AONB Good Practice Guidance and other technical notes is current, follows best practice, and of a consistent standard across the AONB family.
- Encourage more AONBs to adopt protocols for issues such as sustainable transport, and the maintenance of rural roads.
- Ensure that all AONBs have current and up-to-date Landscape Character Assessments.
- Improve the availability and interpretation of environmental and other data for their areas, maximising the opportunities for it be viewed online.
- Review relationships and ways of working with local authority planning departments, providing targeted support to address areas of specialist weakness where capacity allows.

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