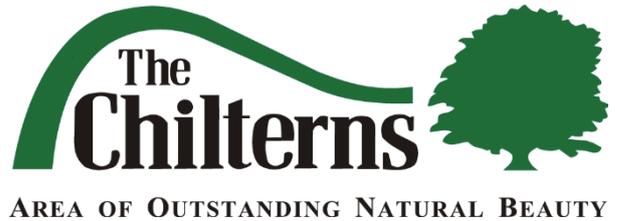


**The Chilterns
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Chilterns AONB in Wycombe District – view from Coombe Hill

Photo: Richard Gillin

**Statement from the Chilterns Conservation Board
Wycombe Local Plan Examination 2018**

MATTER 10 – DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: MARLOW

2nd August 2018

Examination statement from the Chilterns Conservation Board

Introduction

1. The Chilterns Conservation Board is grateful for the opportunity to participate at the Wycombe Local Plan examination.
2. The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) is a statutory body established in 2004 under the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to promote the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and increase the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB. Further information about the Board and our role is set out in Appendix 1.
3. An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an outstanding landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. The Chilterns AONB was designated in 1965. Its special qualities include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower-rich downland, woodlands, commons, tranquil valleys, the network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures.
4. Our statement addresses Inspector's question 1a of matter 10.
5. The Chilterns Conservation Board seeks amendments to delete this allocation in the Chilterns AONB.

Q1. Are the following allocations soundly based and is there evidence that the development of the sites is viable and deliverable?

The allocation of MR6 is not sound, because it is not consistent with national policy, for the reasons set out below:

a) MR6 – Seymour Court Road, Marlow

This site is in the Chilterns AONB. Although small and not major development, the Board objects to the proposed allocation. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the AONB on all sizes of site. The site currently provides a successful transition between the north west residential urban edge of Marlow and the open AONB countryside beyond. There is a footpath through the site and impressive views from Seymour Court Road of rising hills with fields and mature tree belt hedgerows which would be likely to be blocked by development. Housing development on the site would constitute ribbon development. The draft allocation is already leading to pressure for adjacent land to be developed.

The site provides a successful edge between the built-up area and AONB countryside:



The view across the site to the AONB backdrop to Marlow. Taken from Seymour Court Road, development would be likely to obscure this attractive view:



Para 5.2.11 explains that this site lies within the Medmenham Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA), and goes on to state that “the BOA is not a constraint but an opportunity to improve and create new habitats.” It is not clear how habitats could be improved or created on this small site while at the same time accommodating 9 dwellings and an access road.

Recommended changes MR6:

Delete allocation

Conclusion

National policy in the NPPF is clear that “Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value” (para 110, now 171) and that “Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty” (para 115, now 172, which also adds “enhancing”). The revised NPPF adds a new instruction regarding the AONB “The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.”

The Wycombe Local Plan’s proposed allocation of MR6 does not give sufficient weight to the AONB. It does not deliver on the objective to ‘Cherish the Chilterns’, and is inconsistent with policies DM30 on the Chilterns AONB and DM32(d) “Views and vistas, both from and towards the site, paying particular attention to hilltop and skyline views...”.

The Chilterns Conservation Board is grateful for the opportunity to make these representations at the Examination.



The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Chilterns AONB was designated in 1965 for the natural beauty of its landscape and its natural and cultural heritage. In particular, it was designated to protect its special qualities which include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower-rich downland, woodlands, commons, tranquil valleys, the network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures.

Chilterns Conservation Board

The Chilterns Conservation Board is a statutory independent corporate body set up by Parliamentary Order in 2004 under the provisions of Section 86 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

The Board has two statutory purposes under section 87 of the CRoW Act:

- a) To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB; and
- b) To increase the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles, if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, Conservation Boards are to attach greater weight to (a). The Board also has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the AONB.

Like all public bodies, including ministers of the Crown, local authorities and parish councils, the Chilterns Conservation Board is subject to Section 85 of the CRoW Act which states under “General duty of public bodies etc”

“(1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.”

List of Organisations providing Nominees to the Chilterns AONB Conservation Board

The Chilterns Conservation Board has 27 board members, all drawn from local communities:

- Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire County Councils
- Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils (unitary authorities)
- Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, North Hertfordshire, South Buckinghamshire, South Oxfordshire, Three Rivers and Wycombe District Councils
- Dacorum Borough Council
- The Central Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire Parish Councils (6 elected in total), and
- DEFRA (8 in total).