

Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



AONB Office, [REDACTED]
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Philip Reese
Planning Policy Officer (North Dorset)
Dorset Councils Partnership serving:
North Dorset District Council, West Dorset District Council
and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

By Email planningpolicy@north-dorset.gov.uk

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Dear Philip

Neighbourhood Plan for Gillingham

General comments, recommendations, and advice

The relevance of this nationally designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to this consultation is set out in Annex A to this response. Annex B lists the organisations that make up the Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership Board.

The Local Authority partners have formally adopted the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019. It is accessible on our website at <http://www.ccwwdaonb.org.uk/publications/aonb-management-plan/>. The Plan is a material planning matter.

This consultation response has been prepared under delegated authority.

I believe this is the first opportunity that this AONB has had to comment on the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan. I can confirm that this AONB has not been directly engaged by the Neighbourhood Plan team during its deliberations until this stage. The national status of AONBs, the significance of this AONB, and the membership of the AONB Partnership Board are set out in the attached Annexes.

The area of the Plan does not reach to the AONB boundary. However, the topography means that Gillingham sits in a shallow vale that is overlooked by this AONB from the north and the east. It does, therefore, reside in the setting of this AONB.

Furthermore, the public rights of way – in addition to the highways – provide access for the ever increasing population of Gillingham to reach and appreciate the assets of this AONB. That increased access is, however, a mixed blessing as large numbers of visitors can change the tranquillity of the AONB and the experience of visitors.

In the context of Gillingham being a key element in the setting of this AONB, Cranborne Chase AONB welcomes the emphasis on green spaces within and around the town that have the capacity to soften and break up the extent of development when viewed from the high ground of the AONB. The AONB is, however, still concerned that further

efforts should be made to ensure development integrates with the local scene. Light coloured, shiny, and reflective roofs – particularly on extensive employment buildings – can be unnecessarily intrusive. Darker roofs should be an important element of good design, as identified in our good practice guide on Colour in the Landscape.

Cranborne Chase also has particularly dark night skies which are nationally recognised and the AONB team is in the process of gaining international designation of those dark skies. It is, therefore, vitally important that towns and villages within the setting of this AONB adopt policies and strategies to reduce and prevent light pollution. A Neighbourhood Plan is a good vehicle for doing that, so Cranborne Chase AONB would wish to see the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan including policies and actions to control new lighting and to reduce the light pollution from existing lighting. Quite a lot of guidance and information is available on our web sites.

<http://www.ccwvdaonb.org.uk/publications/planning-related-publications/>

<http://www.chasingstars.org.uk/> The team are happy to help with the formulation of policies and action plans.

Gillingham is important as a sustainable gateway to this AONB via the railway and the railway station, as well as the public rights of way. Cranborne Chase AONB Partnership is seeking to encourage sustainable travel and green tourism. To that end it is seeking to facilitate the re-opening of stations and halts within the AONB on the route between Gillingham and Salisbury to enable visitors to access the villages and assets of the AONB. That could also facilitate journeys to work as well as encouraging visitors. However a key factor in getting visitors to use the railway is the availability of affordable parking. The AONB would, therefore, wish to see any adopted plans, such as the Neighbourhood Plan, making provision for additional, and affordable, parking at Gillingham station. That principle is set out clearly in policy PT22 of the AONB Management Plan, which has been adopted by North Dorset District Council and Dorset County Council. For the avoidance of doubt, that provision should be additional to any provision being made to accommodate the growing population of Gillingham that commutes to work elsewhere.

I hope these comments are helpful to you, and the AONB team would be happy to engage with the Neighbourhood Plan team to ensure the inclusion of these important matters in the Neighbourhood Plan as it goes forward.

Yours sincerely

RICHARD BURDEN

Richard Burden BSc DipCons MSc FLI PPLI
Landscape and Planning Advisor (part-time Monday to Wednesday)

For and on behalf of the CCWWD AONB Partnership



Encs: Annex A and Annex B

Annex A

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 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 important area. The national Planning Practice Guidance [Natural Environment paragraph 004] confirms that the AONB and its Management Plan are material considerations in planning.

The National Planning Policy Framework states (paragraph 109) that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes which include AONBs. Furthermore it should be recognised that the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' does not automatically apply within AONBs, as confirmed by paragraph 14 footnote 9, due to other policies relating to AONBs elsewhere within the Framework. It also states (paragraph 115) that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas.

Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires that holders of public office, councillors and the like have 'a duty of regard' to the purposes of AONB designation. National and local Government are thereby clearly directed to have regard for the purposes of AONB designation when carrying out their functions that affect land in or near an AONB. National and local Government, and their departments, therefore have to be able to demonstrate that they have considered the purposes of AONBs in their decision making on any proposed legislative, strategy, policy or implementation matters.

Cranborne Chase is the 6th largest of the nation's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and some 95% of the land in this AONB is under agricultural or woodland management. The combination of farming and forestry activities has contributed to the landscape character of this valued part of the nation. It is, nevertheless, vital that the needs of a viable farming industry are balanced against the need for sensitive environmental management in landscapes of national importance.

Annex B



Cranborne Chase

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONB Office, [REDACTED]

The Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership Board is made up of the following Partner Organisations

Unitary, County, and District Council Membership (1 Member and 1 Officer Representative each)

- Wiltshire Council
- Dorset County Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Somerset County Council
- East Dorset District Council
- North Dorset District Council
- New Forest District Council
- Mendip District Council
- South Somerset District Council

Other Organisations

- Natural England (2 Representatives)
- Historic England (1 Representative)
- Campaign to Protect Rural England (1 Representative)
- Forestry Commission (1 Representative)
- The Country Land and Business Association (1 Representative)
- National Farmers Union (2 Representatives)
- Community Representatives from the Wiltshire and Dorset Associations of Town & Parish Councils (ATPCs) (2 Representatives)