



Committee and Date Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	Item
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19 June 2012	6
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SITE ALLOCATIONS & MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT (SAMDEV) PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION

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Summary

This paper presents commentary on Shropshire Council's current consultation on the Preferred Options for the Site Allocations & Management of Development DPD (Development Plan Document), to inform a response by the AONB Partnership by the deadline of 20 July 2012.

Background

1. The current consultation includes proposals on Site Allocations, and (in order of overlap with the AONB) the following chapters of this are relevant: Bishop's Castle area, Church Stretton area, Much Wenlock area, Minsterley– Pontesbury area, Craven Arms area, Ludlow area, Cleobury Mortimer area, Bridgnorth area, Shrewsbury area. These sections propose housing and employment land allocations within settlements in the AONB, define or redefine development boundaries for certain settlements in the AONB, and define some settlements as either hubs or clusters. This paper however concentrates on the Management of Development section of the document, within which directions for more strategic policies relevant to the AONB are formulated.
2. AONB Partnership responses to consultations on the Core Strategy and the earlier stage of SAMDev have highlighted concerns that the AONB was not being adequately differentiated and given sufficient weight in the emerging Shropshire Local Development Framework. Other authorities for example have included specific AONB policies in their Core Strategies. These issues are still apparent in the current stage of SAMDev. Several references to the AONB Management Plan in the document are disappointingly weak, failing to make clear that the Plan is statutory and contains approved Shropshire Council Policies for the AONB.
3. Under 'MD14 Protecting and Enhancing Shropshire's Natural Environment', one of the 'Proposed Policy Directions' is about landscape, and includes the wording "*Ensure that great weight is given to the protection of landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB. Further guidance is available from the AONB Management Plan*". This wording comes largely from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (CLG, 2012), but to be consistent, and to include the important dimension of pro-active management, the wording should be 'conserving' rather than 'protecting'.
4. The principle previously enshrined in PPS12 (now superseded by the NPPF), that local policies should not duplicate those existing at a higher level, has now gone, and conformity with the NPPF is an important test for LDF policies. However the interpretation of AONB purely in terms of 'landscape and scenic beauty' is

disappointingly narrow, and the opportunity should be taken for a SAMDev policy to add broader and more positive dimensions (as did earlier local policies in relation to the same national wording in former PPS7). The SAMDev policy should mention:

- a. the special qualities of the AONB (as defined by the Management Plan). These go much broader than visual and scenic beauty. In particular, wildlife, heritage, environmental quality and the landscape character of diversity and contrast should be mentioned.
 - b. enhancement as well as conservation of the special qualities. The primary statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.
 - c. secondary AONB purposes to take account of social and economic wellbeing, promote sustainable development and meet the demand for recreation.
 - d. restriction on development outside the AONB which might damage its setting, natural beauty, character or special qualities, or otherwise prejudice the achievement of AONB purposes.
 - e. support for proposals which promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.
 - f. development should reinforce the special qualities of the AONB by sustainable use and management. This is much more positive and pro-active than merely protecting.
5. While 'Natural Environment' is a key focus of the AONB, it is not broad enough to encompass the cultural aspects of landscape and its economic importance. The AONB needs to be properly distinguished in other sections including MD9 Development in the Countryside (both generally and specifically in the paragraphs on agricultural buildings) and MD13 Tourism Facilities and Visitor Accommodation. These topics are highlighted in the AONB Management Plan as key issues for the AONB, and the LDF should pick this up and ensure that for all such issues, special consideration must be given to the AONB.
 6. The Tourism section should make reference to the Shropshire Hills AONB as a key draw of the county for tourism, but an area in which inappropriate development could harm the landscape and therefore potentially the visitor economy. Under Evidence Base in this section, the Tourism Strategy should be correctly described as the approved Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Shropshire Hills and Ludlow, covering the AONB and wider Shropshire Hills area, which aims to integrate the destination and partnership working, and improve the quality and sustainability of tourism provision.
 7. All references to the AONB should support Management Plan objective 33 and Policy 40 to strengthen the identity of the AONB, by referring to 'Shropshire Hills AONB'.
 8. Overall, the document should convey that the Shropshire Hills AONB is a key and multifaceted environmental asset which underpins the economy of the Shropshire Hills area, and which through sound sustainable management offers great opportunities to support the overall vision for the county.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided and offer comments.

List of Background Papers

SAMDev Preferred Options: Policy Directions Consultation: March - July 2012

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy.nsf/open/ECFD00161125BBAD802579A6006045D5>

AONB Partnership response to 2010 Issues & Options consultation for Site Allocations & Management of Development

http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2010/10/Site_Allocations_Mgt_DPD.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