

Sustainability Appraisal Report (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Draft Management Plan 2019 - 2024

November 2018

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A two page non-technical summary is published separately.

1. CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1958. It covers 802km² in Shropshire and the Borough of Telford and Wrekin, extending from the Wrekin to the Clun Forest and from the Stiperstones to the Clee Hills. The area is one of 46 AONBs in the UK. The AONB Partnership is made up of 41 members, and hosted by Shropshire Council.

Lying between the Welsh uplands and the English Midland Plain, the Shropshire Hills is a landscape of diversity, with no single feature or hill dominating. A very varied geology is reflected in the different landforms, habitats and wildlife. The hills themselves, rolling pastoral farmland and woods, rivers and river valleys are the main elements of the landscape. Heritage and antiquity is ingrained in the landscape – in settlement and field pattern, hillforts, traditional buildings, and industrial heritage from charcoal burning to lead mining and stone quarrying. The AONB designation is unusual in its breadth, and also recognises such intangibles as tranquillity and remoteness, along with human values such as local community and culture, and opportunities for quiet enjoyment.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE APPRAISAL PROCESS

The methodology used for this Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is based on Natural England's guidance for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of AONB Management Plans. It has also been informed by the sustainability appraisal for the previous two AONB Management Plans, SEAs undertaken by other AONBs, and government guidance on SEA. The SA has been developed in parallel with the revision of the AONB Management Plan, and this report is published alongside the publication of the draft Management Plan for public consultation. Natural England's guidance is that because AONB Management Plans aim to benefit the environment, the SEA/SA process should be strategic and focus on the policies within the Management Plan.

The natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills is particularly affected by economic and social influences in the area. We have therefore opted once again to go beyond the legal minimum for Strategic Environmental Assessment, and decided to do a fuller Sustainability Appraisal. In line with Natural England's guidance however, this process does not need to be as rigorous as that undertaken by planning authorities for Local Development Framework documents.

A Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was produced in February 2018, and comments on this were received from Historic England. As a result of this some additional plans, policies and programmes have been considered and the comments have influenced the draft Management Plan.

The heart of the Sustainability Appraisal process is the matrix assessment of each draft Management Plan Policy against the SEA and SA objectives. Since there is little change in the draft policies from the last Management Plan, the key issues arising are seen to be very similar to those described in the previous Sustainability Appraisal. The matrix assessment from the

last Sustainability Appraisal has been refreshed for the policies contained in the public consultation draft of the Management Plan. This was carried out by the AONB Manager, who has acted as editor of the Management Plan. An update of the key findings forms the basis of the non-technical summary.

In the matrix assessment (Appendix 1), the interaction between the Management Plan policies and SEA/SA objectives is scored using the following scale:

Policy strongly supports SEA/SA objective	++
Policy supports SEA/SA objective	+
Policy is neutral in relation to objective	N
Policy potentially works against SEA/SA objective	-
Policy strongly works against SEA/SA objective	--

1.3 SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Management Plan policies are presented in three sections, written as high level aims for the Plan:

- **Land management supporting natural beauty and landscape**
- **Planning for a sustainable economy and communities**
- **People enjoying and caring about the landscape**

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND STRATEGIES, INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OBJECTIVES

The full list of other plans and strategies identified as relevant, and their implications for the AONB Management Plan is published at in an Appendix to the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (updated following consultation).

2. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

A description of the state of environment and current trends, the character of the AONB and relevant environmental problems are all contained within the draft AONB Management Plan itself, available at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/a-special-place/management-plan/>.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (essential)

Compatibility of Management Plan objectives and SEA environmental objectives, specifically by assessment of individual policies, scope for mitigation, review of alternative policies / actions

The following objectives have been selected against which to appraise key aspects of the AONB Management Plan. The environmental objectives, which form the essential legal SEA requirement of this process, are those set down in Natural England's guidance, with amendments to E8 and E9 following advice on best practice from English Heritage in 2013. *Note that these are not objectives of the Management Plan, but generalised environmental objectives against which the impacts of the Management Plan can be assessed.*

Environmental objectives (essential)

- E1 To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)
- E2 To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)
- E3 To ensure no adverse effect arises on population (i.e. demographic balance)
- E4 To safeguard human health
- E5 To protect and enhance soil quality
- E6 To protect water
- E7 To protect air and climate
- E8 To conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings
- E9 To protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of landscapes/townscapes, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.
- E10 To protect material assets including natural resources
- E11 To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships

The matrix appraisal of draft AONB Management Plan policies against these objectives is given in Appendix 1. Key issues arising are discussed below.

The main significant negative effects identified between policies in the draft AONB Management Plan and SEA environmental objectives relate to the **relationship between landscape protection and renewable energy**. The key area of potential conflict is Management Plan policies against large scale wind and solar energy development in the AONB, which limit ability to reduce CO2 emissions in the area (objective E7 'To protect air and climate'). The important influence of climate change on the future of the AONB require that this issue be considered carefully. It should be noted that this is not just an issue for the AONB Management Plan, and the consideration of alternatives below therefore recognises the broader context of spatial planning and policy initiatives at a larger scale.

Alternatives to reduce conflict between AONB Management Plan landscape protection policies and development of renewable energy, especially solar and wind energy:

1. Give priority to CO2 targets, allowing large scale solar and wind energy development in AONB.

This approach enables greater gains with CO2 emission reductions, but at the expense of the nationally protected landscape. There are a small number of large wind developments within AONBs, but since the last Management Plan there has been a shift of policy against onshore

wind energy. In the last five years, solar farms have become the focus, although the pressure seems to have dropped more recently with changes to subsidy regimes.

2. Concentrate solar and wind energy development outside protected landscapes.

This option relates more to national and county policies, above the level of an AONB Management Plan but is nevertheless relevant. It represents the general position of current national policy (i.e. NPPF presumption against major development in AONBs), although some decisions seem to go more with option 1 above. A difficult issue arises in relation to Management Plan policies on wind energy development outside but near to the AONB boundary. In line with many other AONBs, the new draft Management Plan introduces a new policy (P1viii) on the setting of the AONB. If however the approach to wind development near AONBs is too restrictive, it could perversely undermine the potential of this option to reduce pressure within AONBs themselves (i.e. every windfarm outside an AONB is one less within one). Given that landscape and visual impact reduces relatively quickly with distance, the policy approach proposed in the Management Plan of only opposing large scale wind development within 5km of the boundary probably represents the right balance. Using the Welsh definition of large (25MW+), this is roughly developments of 8+ large turbines.

3. Vigorously pursue energy conservation measures to reduce demand and the levels of renewable (including solar and wind) energy required.

The AONB Management Plan strongly supports this approach, through its support for to Low Carbon activity and policy in support of energy conservation and low carbon community initiatives. Energy conservation is the most effective way of lowering carbon emissions with least impact on the landscape, and therefore legitimately becomes a concern of the AONB Management Plan. It is not an alternative to renewable energy, but good practice in renewable energy always puts energy conservation first as it reduces the scale of generation necessary, often making renewable options more economic or manageable.

4. Promote and encourage renewable energy measures which are compatible with the AONB and its landscape.

The Management Plan also supports this approach through small scale renewables and especially woodfuel energy. The actual potential of these approaches in relation to the scale of national 80% CO₂ cuts by 2050 needs however to be borne in mind. It is only in combination with options 3 and 2 above that this approach becomes at all viable.

5. Optimise carbon management and sequestration opportunities.

The opportunities for carbon sequestration in the area have not been quantified, but are known to be relatively small in relation to CO₂ emissions from energy. Measures to manage methane emissions from farming, carbon storage in soils, and increasing tree and woodland cover will however have some positive effect.

An effective combination of options 2, 3, 4 and 5 does however provide a realistic and justifiable basis for opposition by the Management Plan to large scale solar and wind energy development as in option 1. Policies have been added in the new draft Plan to be more explicit regarding solar energy, but there is no significant change from the general policy position in the previous Management Plan.

Other issues arising from the Appraisal in relation to environmental issues are as follows:

- **All renewable energy** technologies need to be carefully applied to avoid damage to biodiversity, heritage, landscape and resources.
Good information and guidance will be key to achieving this.
- In the longer term, **climate change** will intensify conflicts between basic human needs (e.g. food, energy) and maintaining nature and landscape.
Demonstration is necessary to show that sustainable food and energy production is compatible in the area with maintaining landscape and nature.

4. "SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES" APPRAISAL (optional)

The additional discretionary sustainability objectives have been defined as part of the scoping process, and are based partly on Natural England's guidance and partly on local priorities.

Additional sustainability objectives (mostly focused on economic and social goals)

- S1 To sustain a thriving economy
- S2 To reduce poverty and deprivation
- S3 To optimise employment opportunities for all
- S4 To maintain and improve quality of life, health and wellbeing for all
- S5 To sustain vibrant, cohesive, safe and sustainable communities
- S6 To promote social inclusion and improve accessibility of services and facilities
- S7 To raise standards of education and training and promote employment skills
- S8 To encourage the use of locally sourced goods and materials
- S9 To encourage the continuation and appropriate diversification of farming
- S10 To protect the environment, people and properties from flood risk
- S11 To reduce the demand for travel and promote modes of travel other than private motor vehicles

Note that these are not objectives of the Management Plan, but generalised economic and social objectives against which the impacts of the Management Plan can be assessed.

The consideration of the Management Plan's policies against social and economic objectives is very worthwhile, as these factors have profound influence on the landscape of the Shropshire Hills. The review of AONB Management Plan policies against these sustainability objectives is also contained in the matrix in Appendix 1. This process shows that the approaches of the Management Plan are generally strong for sustainability, and there are many more positive interactions between issues than negative ones. Indeed the Plan, as it should, provides an important means to navigate some of the key sustainability issues for the area.

In these columns, a good many of the potentially negative interactions have been scored as +/-, indicating that there may be a positive or negative impact. This is explained in the consideration below of key issues arising, which fall into four main groups:

- a) **The effect on the economy of protecting the environment**
- b) **Possible social consequences of seeking to minimise travel**
- c) **Effects on affordability of housing**
- d) **The cost implications of higher standards sought**

a) THE EFFECT ON THE ECONOMY OF PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

AONB designation does prevent some forms of development, which could be seen as potentially limiting economic progress. However the high quality of the AONB's environment is also an economic asset which can be sensitively used for long term sustainable economic benefit, and may be damaged by inappropriate development. Since the last Management Plan there has been an increase in large scale intensive livestock rearing developments, especially poultry, and additional policies have been added on this. There is a particular need to ensure that new farm enterprises and agricultural development are in keeping with the AONB landscape.

Alternatives to reduce any potential conflict might be as follows:

1. Relax Management Plan policies to allow more development.

This may achieve greater economic benefit (in the short term at least), but is at the expense of the environment and landscape qualities of the AONB. In reality it is planning policies more than those in the Management Plan which protect the AONB, and this option would put the Management Plan out of alignment with national and local policies.

2. Be positive about forms of economic development which are compatible with the AONB.

This option is in keeping with the secondary purpose of AONBs '*to promote sustainable forms of economic and social development, which in themselves conserve and enhance the environment*'. It is strongly supported by the Management Plan, e.g. in policies on topics including farming, tourism and appropriate renewable energy. This approach recognises that the AONB Management Plan and the activity of partners needs not just to be about what shouldn't happen, but be positive and proactive about what should happen. There are many examples of this in the AONB Partnership's work, though relating any economic benefits back to the primary AONB purpose will remain important.

3. Demonstrate and publicise the positive economic effects of the environment.

This option links to option 2 above, and aims to gain support for the approach by providing evidence.

4. Provide guidance and support to help reduce negative impacts of development.

This option is also compatible with options 2 and 3 above.

b) POSSIBLE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF SEEKING TO MINIMISE TRAVEL

The AONB Management Plan proposes approaches which seek to limit the impact on the AONB of increased road traffic. In a largely very rural area, people are very dependent on transport by private car, and there is the risk that such policies may have negative social consequences. In reality, the influence of the Management Plan on this issue is relatively small, and is likely to be through the promotion of alternatives such as improved public transport and linking recreation opportunities to public transport. These are likely to have benefits to those most in need. The promotion of local products and sustainable tourism is also likely to support jobs while minimising transport. There is evidence that strengthening community in rural areas can help to reduce dependence on mobility to meet people's needs of homes, jobs and services.

c) EFFECTS ON AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING

High standards of protection of the AONB may exacerbate problems of **affordability of housing**, especially by making the area more attractive to wealthier incomers. The measures to reduce this conflict lie largely beyond the scope of the Management Plan, and lie in the Council's policies for affordable housing and contributions. The Management Plan makes clear that affordable housing should be allowed in the AONB where other forms of development would not be, but that high standards of design need to be maintained.

d) THE COST IMPLICATIONS OF HIGHER STANDARDS SOUGHT

The **higher standards, e.g. of design**, sought in the AONB may add to costs. An emphasis on quality in tourism provision risks excluding those on lower incomes.

This may be somewhat overcome by good guidance and early consideration. Some design aspects do not affect cost, and where higher costs are incurred, there are likely to be some benefits to the local economy (e.g. through using local materials). Provision for low cost accommodation which meets good environmental standards e.g. campsites, hostels, should be supported.

5. MONITORING

The draft AONB Management Plan sets out a series of 'headline indicators' for monitoring the condition of the AONB's special qualities. Based on the analysis above, the following indicators should also ideally be monitored to assess the impact of the Management Plan on other environmental factors and on economic and social objectives:

- Carbon emissions (CO₂ per capita)
- Indices of economic prosperity, including GVA, employment levels, etc.
- Indices of deprivation (the Index of Multiple Deprivation is available at super-output area level).

Data for these may not be available specifically for the AONB.

6. TECHNICAL REVIEW

No particular gaps in information or technical deficiencies have been identified in carrying out this appraisal.

Appendix 1 Sustainability Appraisal matrix for Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24

Ref	POLICIES	Additional sustainability objectives																					Notes (especially on negative impacts identified)		
		E1 To protect and where practical enhance biodiversity (habitats)	E2 To protect and enhance fauna and flora (individual species)	E3 To ensure no adverse effect arises on population (i.e. demographic balance)	E4 To safeguard human health	E5 To protect and enhance soil quality	E6 To protect water	E7 To protect air and climate	E8 To conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings	E9 To protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the historic landscapes/townscapes, strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place	E10 To protect material assets including natural resources	E11 To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships	S1 To sustain a thriving economy	S2 To reduce poverty and deprivation	S3 To optimise employment opportunities for all	S4 To maintain and improve quality of life, health and wellbeing for all	S5 To sustain vibrant, cohesive, safe and sustainable communities, improve accessibility of services and training and promote social inclusion and facilities	S6 To raise standards of education and goods and materials	S7 To encourage the use of locally sourced and appropriate employment skills	S8 To protect the environment and properties from flood risk	S9 To reduce the demand for travel and promote modes of travel other than private motor vehicles	S10 To protect the environment, people and properties from flood risk		S11 To reduce the demand for travel and promote modes of travel other than private motor vehicles	
POLICY LM1 - Land Management Supporting Landscape and Natural Beauty																									
LM1i	Existing areas of high quality habitat should be retained, and networks developed of higher quality habitat through targeted improvements on privately owned land, by all available mechanisms.	++	++	N	+	++	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	+/-	N	N	+	+	N	N	N	+	++	N	Some forms of development and land-use may be inappropriate, but key assets of the area will be enhanced
LM1ii	Pro-active adaptation to climate change, focusing on natural processes and wildlife, is essential to retaining the natural beauty of the AONB and must be given a high priority.	++	++	N	+	++	++	++	N	++	++	+	+/-	+/-	N	+	+	N	N	N	+	++	N	Climate change will intensify pressure on land and potential conflict between food production, energy production and conservation/amenity	
LM1iii	Organisations which regulate designated sites and features, environmental quality and amenity should make full use of available measures to ensure the highest standards appropriate to a nationally protected landscape are achieved in the AONB. A supportive and awareness-raising approach should be used wherever possible, but mechanisms for legal enforcement should be employed where necessary. Known blackspots and problems should be targeted, while consideration should be given to the secondary AONB purposes of having regard for the needs of rural industries and local communities, and promoting sustainable development.	++	++	N	+	++	++	+	++	+	+	N	N	N	N	+	N	N	N	+	+	N	N		
LM1iv	The Shropshire Hills should be a priority area for new environmental land management funding, and farmers should be actively encouraged to utilise the options that best contribute to the AONB Management Plan's aims.	++	++	N	N	+	++	++	++	++	+	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	N		
LM1v	Management of water resources should be given a high priority, including water quality and quantity, habitats and species. Integrated catchment management approaches are supported.	++	++	N	+	+	++	+	N	++	++	+	+	+	+	++	+	N	N	N	++	++	N		
LM1vi	Broadleaved woodland comprising native species should be expanded, with restoration prioritised on Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and Plantation on Wood Pasture (PWP). Where felling is taking place, opportunities should be sought to improve design and landscape sensitivity of plantations. Reversion to open habitat should be targeted to locations where landscape benefits and the potential for high value habitats such as heathland are greatest. Any new or replacement planting should follow the highest standards of design guidelines in relation to landscape and amenity, nature and heritage conservation and resource protection. Planting of new trees outside woodlands should be a high priority, to combat the effects of tree diseases. Disincentives to tree planting within agricultural funding regimes should be removed wherever possible.	++	++	N	+	+	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	N	+	+	+	+	N	+	++	++	N		
LM1vii	The conservation and enhancement of the area's historic environment and heritage assets is a high priority and all activities should seek to enhance or better reveal their significance as well as promote their wider understanding and enjoyment.	+	+	N	+	+	+	N	++	++	+	+	+	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	N	N		

Appendix 1 Sustainability Appraisal matrix for Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24

LM1viii	Farmers and land managers are the main stewards of the landscape, and their actions which help maintain natural beauty and the special qualities of the AONB should be supported. Solutions which enable environmentally, economically and socially sustainable farm businesses should be supported.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	N	+	+	++	+	N	
POLICY P1 - Protection of the AONB																								
P1i	In line with national and local authority planning policies, the AONB has the highest standards of protection for landscape and natural beauty, and the purposes of designation should be given great weight in planning decisions, also taking into account the statutory AONB Management Plan.	++	++	N	+	+	+	-	++	++	+	N	+/-	N	+/-	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
P1ii	Full consideration should be given to the purposes of designation in all decisions affecting the AONB and should reflect sustainability and the full range of special qualities defined in the Management Plan as well as landscape character and visual amenity. Exceptionally where a significant adverse impact associated with development cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation or compensation measures including habitat creation or community benefits, should be sought.	++	++	N	+	+	+	-	++	++	+	N	+	N	N	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	Landscape protection inhibits wind and solar farm development which could help to lower CO2 emissions
P1iii	Tranquillity should be taken fully into account in both strategic and specific decisions. Proposals having a significant impact on tranquillity in the AONB should be prevented where possible. Expansion of airports or alterations to flight path corridors which increase the volume or impacts of air traffic over the AONB should not be allowed.	N	+	N	+	N	N	+	+	++	++	N	+/-	N	+/-	++	+	N	N	N	+	N	+	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
P1iv	Small scale quarrying to supply local materials for repairing traditional buildings and structures is supported, subject to careful consideration of environmental factors, including the conservation value of former quarries where these may be reopened.	++	++	N	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	N	+	N	+	+	N	N	N	+	+	N	N	Some developments which could bring economic benefits will not be compatible
P1v	In line with Shropshire Council policy MD8 on infrastructure, opportunities created by technological advances should be sought to remove or reduce the prominence of hilltop telecommunications structures, while still improving services. New overhead cables should be avoided where possible, with emphasis given to undergrounding or off-grid options.	+	+	N	+	N	N	N	++	++	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
P1vi	Even with small structures not requiring planning permission, care should be taken to avoid loss of wildness. On many hills and in more secluded valleys, especially where there are few man-made objects, this will mean a preference for no structures at all. In cases where structures are essential, their location and design may need to be modified to reduce the impact on wildness.	N	+/-	N	+	N	N	N	+	++	N	N	+	N	N	+	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
P1vii	Development should avoid adverse effects on rivers or streams such as channel alteration or siltation during construction phase, and any ongoing impacts such as increased nutrient run-off or silting due to increased traffic on minor roads. Sustainable drainage systems should be used to aid water quality and slow the speed of water run-off to lessen flooding. Other wetland features such as ponds, marshes and flushes should not be harmed by development.	+	++	N	+	+	++	+	N	+	++	+	+/-	N	N	+	N	N	N	N	+	++	N	Some forms of development may be inappropriate, but key assets of the area will be enhanced

Appendix 1 Sustainability Appraisal matrix for Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24

P1viii	Development in the area around the AONB should be assessed for its impacts on the AONB itself, and also take account of the landscape quality of the setting of the AONB. Measures to consider and mitigate such impacts should include where required Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments; care over orientation, site layout, height and scale of structures and buildings; consideration of the landscape, land uses and heritage assets around and beyond the development site; careful use of colours, materials and non-reflective surfaces; restraint and care in the and use of lighting.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	++	+	N	N	++	+	N	N	N	+	+	N	
POLICY P2 - Landscape																								
P2i	Priority should be given to protecting key features of the landscape. Where possible, existing features such as hedges, watercourses, trees and ponds should be incorporated into site design. Landscaping measures and creation of new features can enhance a development, but these must be appropriate to the location. Changes should only be pursued that are appropriate to each landscape type and the features and characteristics that define local distinctiveness.	++	++	N	+	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	+/-	N	N	+	+	N	N	N	+	++	N	Some forms of development may be inappropriate, but key assets of the area will be enhanced
POLICY P3 - Heritage and development																								
P3i	Existing traditional buildings of heritage interest should be repaired and reused in preference to being replaced by new building, and conservation advice should be sought.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	++	++	+	N	+	N	N	N	N	N	N	++	N	N	N	
P3ii	All proposals relating to the re-use and redevelopment of traditional rural buildings should be informed by an assessment of the farmstead as a whole, including its landscape setting, character, significance and sensitivity to and potential for change. Traditional rural buildings of heritage interest should be retained in appropriate agricultural use, where possible. All proposals for new uses (employment, live-work, residential) will need to be carefully assessed in order to achieve the conservation and enhancement of the heritage asset and secure its sustainable use. Where it can be demonstrated that new buildings will sustain and enhance the significance of a farmstead, an element of new build might offer the most appropriate option.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	++	++	+	N	+	N	N	N	N	N	N	++	N	N	N	
P3iii	New development should take full account of the setting of heritage assets.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	++	++	+	N	+	N	N	N	N	N	N	++	N	N	N	
POLICY P4 - Housing and Design of Development																								
P4i	Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important to clarify expectations and reconcile local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those who will be affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	++	+	+	++	N	+	+	
P4ii	To create truly sustainable places for people to live, great care should be taken to ensure design is of the highest quality whilst at the same time seeking to enhance local distinctiveness. The design of all housing (market priced and affordable) should demonstrate sensitivity to the immediate surroundings and the special qualities of the AONB.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	++	+	+	++	N	+	+	

Appendix 1 Sustainability Appraisal matrix for Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-24

P4iii	Where affordable housing is allowed when other forms of development would not be, in order to meet social need, the standards of design and sensitivity to the AONB should not be compromised. Affordable housing within the AONB is expected to be of a higher design quality than outside the AONB. These cases need to include a rigorous assessment of identified local housing need and consideration of the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development without undermining the purposes of designation. Development should not contribute to the loss of irreplaceable habitats or established ancient trees. All development should be designed so as to protect, restore, conserve and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. All development should be appropriate in scale and density to the surrounding properties. Local character and context should be respected. All development should integrate well into the historic pattern and character of the surrounding built environment and landscape. Appropriate landscaping should be used to ensure new developments are softened and sit well within the landscape. Attention should be paid to how new development is viewed at close quarters within the street scene and how it is seen from the surrounding area.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	++	+/-	N	N	++	+	++	N	+	N	+	+	Higher standards may add to costs, but likely to benefit tourism economy indirectly
P4iv	Building style should reflect local tradition, and local materials should be used wherever possible. Designs should be of a high standard in keeping with the nationally designated landscape. In line with Core Strategy policy CS6, particular regard should be paid to village and town design statements and Conservation Area Appraisals and Design Guides. Innovative sustainable schemes are to be encouraged where they take account of the surrounding vernacular and the use of local materials as well as conserving the integrity of the surrounding landscape.	N	N	-	+	N	N	N	++	++	+	+	+/-	N	N	+	+	+	N	++	N	+	+	
P4v	Roofing materials should be in keeping with those used in nearby buildings, with no bright coloured tiles or reflective surfaces. The use of photovoltaic tiles matching existing and surrounding roof colours should be encouraged in preference to solar panels. External lighting on new developments should be kept to a minimum and use down-lighting to reduce light pollution. Lighting should not highlight structures that would have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding landscape.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	+	++	+	N	N	N	N	+	N	N	N	++	N	N	N	
POLICY P5 - Agricultural development																								
P5i	Farm enterprises need to be in harmony with the environment and sympathetic to the purposes of AONB designation. Farm developments should not degrade landscape quality, which provides an important economic asset for the future. The impact of business-related traffic to and from the property will be an important consideration, including cumulative effects.	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	N	+/-	N	N	+	+	N	+	++	++	+	+	Some forms of diversification may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
P5ii	Design of new agricultural buildings and structures including location, structure and materials should be of a high standard appropriate to the AONB, taking account of the published AONB Agricultural Buildings Design Guidance [79]. Account should be taken of potential impacts on tourism and areas of public access.	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	++	++	+	N	+/-	N	N	+	N	N	N	++	++	+	N	Higher standards may add to costs, but likely to benefit tourism economy indirectly
P5iii	Housing related directly to agricultural development should be appropriate to the needs of agricultural workers and not a short-cut to open market housing.	N	N	+	N	N	N	N	+	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	N	N	+	N	+	
P5iv	Efforts should be made to improve existing buildings where these are of a poor standard, and to remove redundant agricultural buildings which are not suitable for re-use and not of heritage value.	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	++	++	+	N	+	N	N	+	N	N	N	+	+	+	N	

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P5v	Large and multiple agricultural buildings for intensive livestock rearing such as poultry must meet the stringent tests for major development in national policy, and only be permitted in these exceptional circumstances.	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	++	++	++	+	+/-	+	N	+	+	N	N	N	+	+	+	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
P5vi	Criteria indicating that applications for intensive livestock buildings should be refused include where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the scale of buildings would exceed the existing farmstead built footprint proximity to existing sheds would create significant cumulative impacts location is proposed in open field locations away from other farm buildings significant earth-moving or bunding is proposed the topography means that the development will be easily visible harm to landscape character cannot be satisfactorily mitigated proximity to residential properties or other businesses (within 400m has potential to generate harmful impacts on amenity, as recognised in the restriction in this zone for agricultural permitted development) units would be accessed by narrow roads and/or heavy traffic movements would alter the character of rural lanes or damage hedges or verges. 	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	++	++	++	+	+/-	+	N	+	+	N	N	N	+	+	+	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
POLICY P6 - Highways & Road Management																								
P6i	Road improvement schemes within and outside the AONB should not increase noise pollution or emissions from traffic. Approaches like speed management schemes may, for example, be more appropriate than road widening. Potential impacts within the AONB of proposed road improvement schemes beyond the boundary should be considered. Road management and improvement schemes in the AONB should minimise landscape impact and avoid urbanisation of rural roads – for instance through sensitive and appropriate design and use of materials, and avoiding unnecessary signage clutter, road markings and coloured road surfaces. In conservation areas, special care should be taken to use the correct colour and width of lines when marking out roads. Wildflower-rich verges should be managed appropriately.	++	+	N	+	+	+	++	+	++	+	N	-/+	N	+/-	++	+/-	+/-	N	+	N	N	++	People are travelling more and more to access jobs and services, which is not sustainable
P6ii	The potential impact on freshwater habitats should be borne in mind and rural SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) should be used where possible.	++	++	N	+	+	++	+	N	++	++	+	+	+	++	+	N	N	N	++	++	N		
P6iii	The provision of any new public car parking should be in scale with the setting and capacity of roads used to reach the location. Larger car parks should generally be situated nearer to settlements or larger roads. Where informal roadside parking is improved to alleviate traffic problems on smaller roads, care should be taken to avoid adding to traffic levels. Design should be appropriate to a rural setting for example stone surfacing, timber for edging and signs.	+	N	N	N	+	+	+	+	++	+	N	+/-	N	N	+	N	N	N	+	+	N	++	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
P6iv	Strategies for transport affecting the AONB should not be solely informed by a 'predict and provide' model of increasing capacity to deal with increased traffic flow. The need for road upgrades and improvements which could have detrimental effects on the AONB may be avoided by use of other measures.	++	++	N	+	+	+	++	+	++	+	N	+/-	N	+/-	+	+	+/-	N	++	+	N	++	People are travelling more and more to access jobs and services, which is not sustainable
POLICY P7 - Renewable Energy																								
P7i	Major developments of wind and solar energy, and woodfuel or biomass processing should be refused within the AONB, unless it can be demonstrated the proposals are in the public interest and the tests of exceptional circumstances in AONBs as set out in NPPF para 172 can be fully satisfied.	+	+	N	+	+	+	+/-	+	++	+	N	+/-	N	+/-	+	+	N	+	++	++	+	+	Protecting the landscape rules out measures such as large windfarms and solar farms which could be effective in lowering carbon emissions. Some development and employment opportunities are lost.

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P7ii	For ground-mounted solar installations in the AONB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • these should not be overlooked from publicly accessible vantage points • development should not necessitate the removal of landscape features such as trees and hedgerows. • Ancillary equipment such as security fencing, security lighting, storage cabins and grid infrastructure, should be screened by planting of trees. • Brownfield sites are preferable to greenfield sites, but taking into account their biodiversity value. 	+	+	N	+	+	+	N	+	++	+	N	N	N	N	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	
P7iii	Small scale domestic renewable installations are encouraged. Where solar panels are used, consideration should be given to visual impacts. Non-reflective or anti glare options should be used. Solar panels should not be used on listed buildings or heritage assets nor on buildings on a site designated as a scheduled monument. The cumulative effect of solar panels in a conservation area should be avoided. In a conservation area, solar panels should face away from the road or lane. They should be flush fitting to the roof and be the same colour as the tiles. The design and installation of such installations should take account of visual amenity. Greater sensitivity will be required in Conservation Areas.	N	N	N	N	N	N	+	+	++	+	N	N	N	N	+	N	N	N	+	N	N	N	
P7iv	Community low carbon initiatives in keeping with the AONB's purposes should be supported and renewable energy proposals assessed on a range of sustainability criteria.	++	++	N	++	+	+	++	+/-	+/-	++	N	+/-	+/-	+/-	++	+	+/-	+	+	+	++	++	Insensitive measures to reduce carbon could damage the landscape. Low carbon approaches are sometimes more expensive, but sometimes save money. Some types of development are inappropriate. The area is heavily dependent on car transport for accessing jobs and services.
P7v	Existing resources in the area, such as woodfuel and agricultural by-products, may contribute usefully to biomass energy as well as sustainable land management, but processing facilities should be of a scale and location appropriate to the AONB. Establishment of energy crops should avoid harm to biodiversity, water quality and availability, and where larger and longer-lived than normal agricultural crops, should take account of visual amenity (for example, following forestry design guidelines regarding scale and shape of compartments including in relation to landform, structural diversity and edge treatments).	++	+	N	+	N	N	++	+	++	+	N	+	+	+	+	+	N	+	++	++	+	N	Biomass energy must use clean burn technologies to avoid air pollution
P7vi	There should be no development of wind turbines (other than in accordance with permitted development rights) within the 'High Open Moorland' and High Volcanic Hills and Slopes' Landscape Types in the AONB.	N	+	N	N	N	N	--	+	++	N	-	+/-	N	N	+/-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
P7vii	Proposals for wind turbines within the AONB should take account of factors including landscape character, visual amenity, biodiversity, heritage and recreation, and the following guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 100m of buildings (excluding Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas), one or two wind turbines of up to 12m to blade tip are likely to be acceptable within the AONB. • There are not likely to be any parts of the AONB where turbines of over 30m to blade tip, or groups of more than five turbines would be acceptable. • Wind turbine proposals should be linked to local energy needs and energy conservation measures. Community benefits should relate to energy in preference to amenity or other measures. 	N	+	N	N	N	N	--	+	++	N	-	+/-	N	N	+/-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	

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P7viii	Decisions on proposals for wind turbines and associated infrastructure outside the AONB should take account of the potential impacts within the AONB, especially the extent of visibility and significance of viewpoints affected, and potential cumulative effects with existing structures.	N	N	N	N	N	N	-	+	++	N	-	+/-	N	N	+/-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
P7ix	Land within 5km of the AONB boundary is unsuitable for large scale windfarm development, and should be excluded from any Search Areas. (As used by TAN 8, the definition of 'large' is developments of 25MW and over).	N	+	N	N	N	N	--	+	++	N	-	+/-	N	N	+/-	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
POLICY P8 - Tourism and recreation development																									
P8i	The siting, design and specification of new developments for tourism and recreation should be to high standards of environmental sensitivity and sustainability. The following guidelines are recommended <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single developments of more than around ten accommodation units are less likely to be supported in small settlements and open countryside. Large static caravan parks are likely to be intrusive. Smaller sites with good landscaping are preferable, and facilities for touring caravans and camping generally have a low impact as there are fewer permanent structures. Built facilities for recreation should only be allowed where their location and the activities they support are compatible with the special qualities of the AONB. 	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	++	+	N	+/-	N	+/-	+	+	N	N	+	+	N	+	+	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
P8ii	Smaller, low-key tourism developments designed in sympathy with local character will blend better into the area and spread economic benefits more widely than larger facilities.	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	+	N	N	+	+	N	+/-	+	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities
P8iii	Temporary structures taking an overtly environmental approach (e.g. glamping, yurts) can provide high quality experiences within the rural landscape and be relatively low impact. Their siting should however avoid harm to landscape features such as wildlife or archaeological sites, and related development such as toilet blocks and car parking should be sensitively designed and landscaped. More permanent structures such as cabins are built development and should in general be sited close to other existing buildings. Static caravans rarely blend in well in any location and are discouraged.	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	N	N	+	+	N	+	+		
P8iv	Tourism businesses will be supported to take a sustainable approach and encourage their visitors to do likewise.	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+		
P8v	Recreation activities which are inherently noisy or intrusive should be discouraged, and where possible prevented. Planning mechanisms should be used where possible to control organised motorsports events, which are disproportionately intrusive to other visitors and residents and the environment.	+	+	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/-	N	N	+	+	N	N	+	+	N	N	N	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities	
P8vi	Events in the AONB such as concerts, festivals, and challenge walks should be planned (e.g. in location, timing and scale) to minimise environmental impact, and regular events should not be allowed or encouraged to grow to a scale where problems arise. Event organisers should seek advice at the planning stages to enable this.	N	N	N	+	+	+	N	+	+	+	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	+	
P8vii	The quality and suitability of public rights of way as a means of experiencing a high quality rural environment should as far as possible be protected, e.g. against significantly increased vehicle use, inappropriate resurfacing or building directly adjacent.	N	N	N	N	+	+	N	+	+	+	N	N	N	+	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	+	
POLICY EC1 - People enjoying and caring about the landscape																									

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EC1i	Tourism activities which draw on the special qualities of the area without harming them should be especially encouraged. This may include development of access infrastructure (e.g. off road cycle routes, rights of way), use of public transport, historic and natural sites, interpretation to help aid understanding, enterprises based specifically on the special qualities of the AONB (e.g. wildlife watching, landscape painting, walking festivals) and cultural events.	+	++	N	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	++	++	N	++		
EC1ii	Environmentally sound leisure and recreation activities in keeping with the AONB should be encouraged and promoted - including low resource-use activities, those with minimum damage to the landscape, and following 'quiet enjoyment' principles.	+	++	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	N	+/-	N	+/-	++	+	N	N	+	++	N	++	Some forms of development may not be appropriate, but protecting the environment provides and maintains other opportunities. Walking is especially valuable to the area.
EC1iii	Recreational off-road use of motor vehicles should not be encouraged or promoted within the AONB. Voluntary measures and pro-active work with users are recommended to minimise the impact of legal off-road use of motor vehicles on the landscape and on people's quiet enjoyment of the countryside. Where the impact on the AONB is significant however, measures including traffic regulation orders restricting legal use should be employed. Illegal motorised activities should as far as possible be prevented, and pro-active support given to the police to do so.	N	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	N	N	N	N	+	+	N	N	N	N	N	++	
EC1iv	Infrastructure associated with countryside access should be sensitively designed and appropriate materials should be used, including stone for surfacing of a type appropriate to the location, wooden signposts and gates on rights of way, and cycle route signage of a rural character.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	++	++	+	N	N	N	N	+	N	N	N	++	N	N	N	
EC1v	Countryside attractions and walks should be linked where possible to settlements where services and public transport facilities exist and can be promoted, helping to maximise economic benefits, especially from day visitors. Promotion of the area for tourism should aim to minimise car travel. Towns and locations best served by public transport should receive the main promotion as 'gateways' to the Shropshire Hills, in preference to locations where access is only possible by car.	N	N	N	++	N	N	+	+	+	+	N	++	+	+	++	+	+	N	++	+	N	++	
EC1vi	Opportunities should be should be taken to strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills for its exceptional landscape value. Consistent use of the 'Shropshire Hills' identity should be given greater prominence in tourism and other forms of promotion, along with the special qualities of the AONB and opportunities for visitors to adopt a sustainable approach.	+	+	N	N	N	N	N	++	+	N	N	++	+	+	+	+	N	N	++	+	N	+	
EC1vii	Opportunities and promotion aimed at both visitors and the local community should encourage people to experience the AONB's countryside more fully in more sustainable and less potentially damaging or disruptive ways.	N	N	+	++	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	+	N	++		
Policy B1 - The AONB boundary																								
B1	At the current time, the benefits of formally amending the AONB boundary would not be justified against the considerable costs and resources this would entail. The AONB Partnership and local authorities will work, and encourage partners and others to work, in ways which strengthen the integrity and identity of the Shropshire Hills AONB as an area of exceptional landscape value. The Partnership will focus its work strongly on the designated AONB area, but will work in a flexible and pragmatic way in relation to the boundary to secure the maximum benefit for the Shropshire Hills. If the process for amending boundaries is made easier, this policy will be reviewed.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	+	N	N	+	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N		
Policy WF1 - The Wrekin Forest																								

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5I	<p>The management of the wider Wrekin Forest area is crucial to the integrity of the Wrekin itself within the AONB and should continue to be recognised and integrated within planning policy. The landscape quality of the wider Wrekin Forest area should be protected as far as possible, and the management of the Wrekin itself integrated with this surrounding area. The Wrekin Forest Partnership provides a vital local forum for this important area and should be supported and its links to the AONB Partnership maintained. The Wrekin Forest Partnership needs to develop as a long-term structure linked to permanent funding for a dedicated staff resource to take and co-ordinate action on the ground.</p>	+	+	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	N	N	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
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