

# High Weald Joint Advisory Committee

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*Working together to care for one of England's finest landscapes*

Ashford Borough Council

7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Emailed to [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Davies,

## **21/00790/AS Up to 145 homes, land between Woodchurch Road and Appledore Road, Tenterden**

Thank you for your consultation on the above planning application, which is a major development in the setting of the High Weald AONB.

### Legal and Policy Background

It is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority to decide whether the application meets legislative and policy requirements in respect of AONBs. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires local authorities to have regard to 'the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs' in making decisions that affect the designated area. The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 172 requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 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 all these areas.

The Planning Practice Guidance on development in the setting of AONBs says "Land within the setting of these areas often makes an important contribution to maintaining their natural beauty, and where poorly located or designed development can do significant harm. This is especially the case where long views from or to the designated landscape are identified as important, or where the landscape character of land within and adjoining the designated area is complementary. Development within the settings of these areas will therefore need sensitive handling that takes these potential impacts into account".

The [High Weald AONB Management Plan](#) has been adopted by all the relevant local authorities with land in the AONB as their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it, and is a material consideration for planning applications. The Management Plan defines the natural beauty of the AONB in its Statement of Significance and

Anglesey  
Arnside and Silverdale  
Blackdown Hills  
Cannock Chase  
Chichester Harbour  
Chilterns  
Clwydian Range  
Cornwall  
Cotswolds  
Gower  
Cranbourne Chase and Dee Valley  
West Wiltshire Downs  
Dedham Vale  
Dorset  
East Devon  
Forest of Bowland  
Howardian Hills  
**High Weald**  
Isle of Wight  
Isles of Scilly  
Kent Downs  
Lincolnshire Wolds  
Llyn  
Malvern Hills  
Mendip Hills  
Nidderdale  
Norfolk Coast  
North Devon  
North Pennines  
North Wessex Downs  
Northumberland Coast  
Quantock Hills  
Shropshire Hills  
Solway Coast  
South Devon  
Suffolk Coast and Heaths  
Surrey Hills  
Tamar Valley  
Wye Valley



identifies the key landscape components of the High Weald. The Management Plan then sets objectives for these components and identifies actions that could conserve and enhance the AONB. These should be used as a 'checklist' against which to assess the impact of proposals on AONB purposes. A template is provided in the [Legislation and Planning Advice Note](#).

In the event that the Local Planning Authority considers that the principle of development is acceptable, it is recommended that the following detailed requirements are met:

- The [High Weald AONB Design Guide](#) should be used to ensure that the design of the development is landscape-led, locally distinctive and conserves and enhances the setting of the AONB;
- The [High Weald Colour Study](#) should be used to select the colours of external materials of structures so that they are appropriate to the setting of the High Weald AONB landscape;
- Drainage proposals should seek to restore the natural functioning of river catchments and avoid polluting watercourses, especially where these flow through the AONB downstream of the application site (Management Plan objective G1);
- A Management Plan for the Country Park and other areas of open space should be a requirement of any planning permission. It is requested that the High Weald AONB Unit be involved in the details of this Plan and be invited to participate in any liaison groups to advise on the future management of the land;
- Local habitats and species should be protected and enhanced as appropriate, creating networks connecting into the High Weald AONB (Management Plan objectives G3, R2, W1, W2, FH2, and FH3);
- Native, locally sourced plants should be used for any additional landscaping to support local wildlife and avoid contamination by invasive non-native species or plant diseases (Management Plan objective FH3); and
- Controls over lighting should be imposed (Institute of Lighting Professionals recommended light control zone E1) to protect the intrinsically dark night skies of the High Weald (Management Plan objective OQ4).

The above comments are advisory and are the professional views of the AONB Unit's Planning Advisor on the potential impacts on the High Weald landscape. They are not necessarily the views of the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Tester MRTPI  
Planning Advisor, High Weald AONB Unit  
*Advising on the management of a nationally important landscape*

## Background Information about the High Weald AONB



The High Weald was designated in 1983 as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is an exceptionally beautiful medieval landscape covering 564 square miles across the counties of East and West Sussex, Kent and Surrey.

The High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee is a partnership established in 1989 of 15 local authorities, Defra, Natural England and organisations representing farming, woodland, access and community interests. The JAC is responsible for publishing and monitoring the statutory AONB Management Plan. The JAC is supported by a small, dedicated staff team, the High Weald AONB Unit, which provides advice on how to conserve and enhance the AONB. The advice provided by the AONB Unit assists public bodies and statutory undertakers to meet their duty as set out in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs in making decisions that affect it.

Unlike National Park authorities, the High Weald AONB Unit is not a statutory body but an advisory one. It is not a local planning authority and the responsibility for determining planning applications remains with the 15 local authorities. The AONB Unit is not a statutory consultee on planning matters and it remains each local planning authority's decision whether or not they seek its advice on a particular planning application.

The scope of the advice in this letter is set by the statutory High Weald [AONB Management Plan](#), which has been adopted by all partner authorities, as 'their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.