



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Position Statement Number 3

The Relevance of the Setting of the AONB

(including Addendum December 2012)

The concept of “setting” is set out in the legislation relating to Listed Buildings. It is generally recognised that the form, qualities, and character of an area within which a building sits contribute greatly to the sense of place, even though an historic or architecturally significant building creates its own presence. There it is clearly a two way effect; the setting providing the distinctive context and benefiting the Listed Building and the Listed Building contributing to the character and qualities of the wider environment. Each adds value to the other. A similar situation exists on the edge of an AONB, especially where the landscapes and landforms link and, visually or functionally, join the surroundings to the AONB. Proposals for change in the setting should, therefore, have regard to the inter-relationship with the AONB and the landscape character and qualities.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are nationally designated areas of especially fine landscape. 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. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 reiterates the purpose and designation procedures for AONBs as well as making provision for national funding of the local management of these national resources. Natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage, and 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 and environmental capital.

In addition, the setting of an AONB has been incorporated in Policy ENV3 of the emerging South West Regional Spatial Strategy [RSS], and Policy C2 of the South East RSS. Policy ENV3 says that particular care will be taken to ensure that no development is permitted outside Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which would damage their natural beauty.

RSSs also draw attention to the national status of AONBs and their Management Plans. The Management Plan for this AONB, adopted by all the Local Authority partners, states [p 54] “Where visible from the AONB, the surrounding landscape, which is often of significant landscape value, is an important element of the AONB’s natural beauty. Relevant local planning authorities must have regard for the landscape and visual impact of major development adjacent to or within close proximity of the AONB’s boundary.”

The potential for development to impact on the setting of an AONB, and hence being a material matter in the consideration of the acceptability of that development, has recently been reaffirmed by the Planning Inspectorate [APP/P1235/A/06/2012807, 2007]. That Inspector wrote:

“I consider that the area immediately abutting an AONB will be relevant where the appreciation of the natural beauty of the designated area may be affected by what lies outside it. In my view, this is analogous to development outside of a Green Belt, where Planning Policy Guidance *Green Belts* (PPG2) advises, at paragraph 3.15, that the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development conspicuous from the Green Belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design. I therefore agree with the Council that the effect on the AONB is a material consideration.”

The setting of an AONB and the potential impacts of development upon it are explicitly picked up in paragraph 3.2.8 of the West Dorset Local Plan [2006] in relation to the Dorset AONB.

“The policy [relating to development in the AONB] will apply not only to development within the AONB, but also to any development outside the AONB that is sufficiently prominent (in terms of its siting or scale) to have an impact on the area’s natural beauty. Where development may be prominent in the wider landscape (either within or outside the AONB), the District Council will require the Landscape Masterplan (see Table 11.1) to include a visual envelope study and photomontages.”

The Secretary of State [APP/N1215/1191202 & 1191206, 2007] also confirmed that the AONB is a material planning consideration when determining the ‘called in’ proposal for housing development to the east of Shaftesbury which is within the setting of this AONB.

The Partnership for this AONB, therefore, draws the attention of all relevant authorities, land managers, developers, and their agents and consultants to the importance of the setting of the AONB and urges them to

- a) Acknowledge and accept the concept of the setting of the AONB.
- b) Adopt policies and practices which recognise, conserve, and enhance the settings of this AONB.
- c) Involve the AONB staff regarding work that may affect the AONB or its settings.
- d) Take into account the views and professional opinions and judgements of the AONB team.

At its meeting on 9th December 2008 the AONB Partnership Panel endorsed the Position Statement and said:

The Partnership Panel encourages all relevant authorities, land managers, developers, and their agents and consultants to recognise the settings of the AONB and undertake the associated practices set out in the Position Statement Number 3.

RFB 10/12/08

Addendum

The concept and scope of the setting of AONB was a key factor in the appeal by public inquiry into the refusal of planning permission for four 120m high wind turbines near Silton, in North Dorset, about 2.5km outside the AONB.

The Inspector noted that

'...there are spectacular views across the broad expanse of the Blackmore Vale towards and beyond the site [to and from the AONB]' and that

'...the site forms part of the panoramic views across the Blackmore Vale from the AONB'.

He also concluded

'...the site forms an integral part of an undulating and tranquil farmland landscape that is set against a distant back-drop of a chalk escarpment [the AONB]'.

In dismissing the appeal, the Inspector said [paragraph 46 of his decision, 8 11 2012]:

'I conclude on the first main issue [the effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the AONB] that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and the setting of the AONB.'

He also concluded that the harm arising from the proposal would not be outweighed by its benefits.

NB Despite the declared intention to do away with Regional Planning Guidance the South West Guidance has not yet been abolished.

RFB 18/12/2012