

**A summary of
strategy and planning advisory work
by Worcestershire County Council
in the Wye Valley AONB**

April 2017 to March 2018

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Worcestershire County Council in the Wye Valley AONB – April 2017
to March 2018**

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1. Introduction

Between April 2017 and March 2018, the Strategic Planning and Development Management teams at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) provided a consultancy role to the Wye Valley AONB Unit, advising on strategic planning issues and development management as required. This report provides a summary of the main aspects of the work undertaken over that period.

2. Strategic policy consultations

In the last year, WCC supported the Wye Valley AONB Unit in providing a response to the *Herefordshire Local Plan – Rural Areas Site Allocations Development Plan Document: Issues and Options Paper*. The comments stated that the AONB Unit was supportive of the Plan because it would provide further certainty in terms of the location and quality of new developments. The comments highlighted the importance of taking into account the impact on the natural and historic landscapes of the Wye Valley AONB when defining the settlement boundaries and setting criteria to allocate new sites for development.

A brief summary of the Unit's policy response is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

3. Planning casework

Planning applications in the AONB

Planning applications requiring consideration by the AONB were identified through lists of relevant applications sent to WCC by the Wye Valley AONB on a weekly basis. Table 1 is a summary of the planning applications within the AONB for 2017-2018.

Table 1 - Summary statistics for planning applications April 2017 to March 2018
(2016-17 figures in brackets)

Local Authority	No. of applications registered	No. of applications considered relevant to Wye Valley AONB	No. of applications consulted with the AONB Unit	No. of responses submitted to the Planning Authority
Herefordshire Council	327 (235)	188 (115)	17 (20)	2 (7)
Forest of Dean District Council	85 (79)	50 (48)	2 (4)	0 (4)
Monmouthshire County Council	155 (186)	121 (127)	3 (11)	1 (0)
Gloucestershire County Council	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Totals	568 (500)	359 (290)	22 (35)	3 (11)

There were 568 planning applications registered, based on the lists of applications provided by the Wye Valley AONB Unit between April 2017 and March 2018. This is a small increase since last year.

At 359, the number of applications identified as relevant for consideration because of potential impacts on the Wye Valley AONB increased compared to the previous year, when 290 applications were considered.

On 22 occasions, WCC consulted the AONB Unit planning applications of potential adverse impact, however written responses were provided to only three of these applications, a significant drop since last year. This decrease is due to a more targeted approach to our responses and more effective initial consultation with the AONB Unit, combined with their closer liaison with respective LPA case officers.

The AONB Unit responses stated various concerns in relation to the proposed developments, but none of them was an outright objection.

On two occasions, the comments submitted by the AONB Unit were noted by the case officers but the assessment of all matters relating to the proposals led to the approval of planning applications. One planning application remains undecided.

A summary of the AONB Unit's representations, alongside the planning decision and extracts from the case officers' reports, can be found in Appendix 2.

4. Conclusions

This report covers the third year of the Worcestershire County Council consultancy work provided for the Wye Valley AONB Unit. This year saw an even more targeted approach to the WCC advice, as a result of improved systems such as WCC consulting on its proposed approach to the application with the AONB Unit at an early stage, and increased familiarity among WCC officers of the AONB's policies and guidance, and of relevant AONB issues.

Appendix 1 – Summary of responses to strategic consultations in the period April 2017 – March 2018

Consulting authority	Consultation document	Summary of Unit response
National consultations		
None		
County or Unitary level consultations		
Herefordshire County Council	Herefordshire Local Plan – Rural Areas Site Allocations Development Plan Document: Issues and Options Paper	<p>We welcome the Herefordshire Rural Areas Site Allocation Development Plan (RASA DPD) because it will offer further interpretation of policies RA1 and RA2 of the adopted Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy. It will provide further certainty in terms of the location and quality of new developments in these locations.</p> <p>The AONB Unit is supportive over the defining of settlement boundaries within the RASA DPD. Boundaries which fall within or in the setting of the AONB should be very carefully considered and take into account their impact on the natural and historic landscapes of the Wye Valley AONB, which is accorded the highest status of protection by Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework. It is very important that the boundaries reflect the historic settlement patterns and protect these settlements from overdevelopment and coalescence.</p> <p>Any allocations which could be considered major development in the AONB must apply the tests in Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The landscape and visual impact on the Wye Valley AONB will be essential criteria in allocating new sites for development within these Parish areas. Sites should be allocated only where the impacts on the local landscape character and the AONB's Special Qualities can be minimised. The location, distribution and size of the allocations should be informed by the Strategic Objectives of the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2015-20, particularly WV-D2 and WV-D3.</p> <p>The AONB Unit considers that Local Green Space should be designated where appropriate, in consultation with the local community and stakeholders. Where green space is proposed for allocation within the AONB or its setting, the AONB Unit should also be consulted.</p>
District Level consultations		

None

Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)

The AONB Manager provided information to the following NDPs:-

Woolhope

Ross

Goodrich & Welsh Bicknor

Hewelsfield & Brockweir

Appendix 2 Summary of Planning Applications - April 2017 to March 2018

Herefordshire Council

Application details	AONB comments	Planning decision	Justification
<p>P163707/F</p> <p>Proposed residential development of 10 open market family homes and 5 affordable homes.</p> <p>Land opposite Mill House Farm Fownhope Herefordshire</p>	<p>We recognise that the site has been allocated for housing, albeit less than proposed in this application. It remains for the Council to determine whether this constitutes major development under Section 116 of the NPPF. The principle issue is the scale and density of development and the sensitivity of the design in the context of the local landscape character.</p> <p>We acknowledge the modifications to the site design, layout and landscaping and the use of house designs and colours which reflect the vernacular architecture. The Design & Access Statement states “Sustainable Development are specifically addressed by the submitted and updated Landscape Character and Visual Analysis, Landscape Report and Landscape Management Plan”. However there appears to be no references to the sustainability criteria of the Neighbourhood Plan Policy FW16: b) “Utilising physical sustainability measures associated with buildings that include, in particular, orientation of buildings, the provision of energy and water conservation measures, cycle and recycling storage... and renewable energy infrastructure such as photovoltaic panels”. We believe the housing layout and designs should be modified further to make the buildings more sustainable in energy use without losing their vernacular reference. We would also welcome further assurances that the detail of the type and colour of materials would not be diluted subsequent to any approval of the development. Of particular concern are the types and colours of stonework, brickwork and rendered walls of the prominent two storey houses. This will be crucial to ensure this development blends into its wider setting (for example, as in View 17 and 38).</p> <p>The proposal includes traditional orchard planting. This will help to soften the edge of the development and will be an enhancement to the local area and this prominent ‘gateway’ to the village. However,</p>	<p>Approved with conditions</p>	<p>The site is now less than 1ha in extent and is for fewer than half the number of dwellings. Mitigation remains in the form of orchard and wildflower meadow planting to north-east and north-west.</p> <p>The CS has reaffirmed Fownhope as a main village where proportionate growth may be sought and even more importantly, the Parish has adopted a NDP, which amongst other things, identifies the application site as a housing allocation</p> <p>Overall, on this matter, officers are of the opinion that the proposal is not major development. Accordingly NPPF 116 is not applicable. This is not to diminish the importance of NPPF 115 and Development Plan policies which confirm the great weight that goes to conservation of</p>

	<p>there does not appear to be any information about how this will be managed neither as grassland nor as orchard. A viable and sustainably resourced management plan is required. We also consider that there should be a condition on protection of this orchard to ensure that the settlement boundary is not extended further in a north-westerly direction, as there will be no coherent link to any further development. We would also suggest that front gardens are protected by conditions and trees on the site are protected through Tree Preservation Orders.</p> <p>Finally, we are concerned that there is no assessment of how lighting will affect the views at dawn/dusk and night time. This should be considered as part of this application and any lighting should be minimised and controlled by appropriate conditions.</p> <p>If the Council are minded to approve this application in the AONB then we would expect the above observations to be taken into account, to ensure that the development is as sustainable as possible with the minimum detrimental impact on the Wye Valley AONB.</p>		<p>landscape and scenic beauty in such areas.</p> <p>It is accepted that the scheme layout proposes mitigation, compensation and enhancement, which could potentially reduce localised adverse effects in the longer-term. The scheme is considered to respond positively overall to the requirement to conserve landscape and scenic beauty in accordance with NPPF 115.</p>
<p>P180131/F Application for variation of a condition 4 of planning permission P150509/F (Proposed 13 bedroom extension to existing nursing home, newfreestanding 25 bedroom EMI care unit with associated car/cycle parking, biomass boiler building, new access road and landscaping scheme). To incorporate design changes. Hazelhurst Nursing Home Bishopswood Ross-On-Wye</p>	<p>We are disappointed that the applicant has found it necessary to elevate the building and widen the access road in places. We continue to view this as a large development in the AONB but acknowledge that the lower EMI Unit has been approved. As previously stated, when viewed from Coppett Hill the landscape has little capacity to absorb any more large structures without significant detrimental impact on the AONB.</p> <p>If the Council is minded to grant planning permission, the landscaping scheme must be rigorously implemented, monitored and enforced, especially to ensure that mature trees grow up around the EMI Unit. Additionally there should be further specimen, parkland and/or woodland tree planting around the EMI Unit and to the south and east of the Unit to provide more screening of the building from neighbouring properties and glimpsed views from the B4234, Wye Valley Walk etc.</p> <p>In determining this application, the Council will need to balance the harm to the nationally important landscape of the AONB against</p>	<p>Approved</p>	<p>The approved scheme showed a length of approximately 70 metres at 3.6 metres (252 square metres) and a length of some 105 metres at 5.5 metres (577.5 square metres). The proposal is now that it would have a uniform width of 4.8 metre (840 square metres). Therefore the amount of hardsurface is almost equivalent to that approved (possibly some 10.5 square metres more). It is my opinion, that this change would not have a negative landscape impact. In fact, I think it would be an improvement in that the previous 5.5 metre width would have been more intrusive</p>

Herefordshire HR9 5QX	any social and economic benefits of the scheme. Under section 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the Council must give 'great weight' to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.		being on the steeper gradient and in many respects the change in width would have drawn attention to it.
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Monmouthshire County Council

Application details	AONB comments	Planning decision	Justification
DC/2017/00868 A telecoms mast Tump Farm Whitebrook NP25 4TU	<p>The application fails to have regard to the Wye Valley AONB and the Strategic Objectives set out in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan. The design and location is of a standard lattice mast in an exposed position in open countryside on the lip of the valley beside the regional recreational asset of the Wye Valley Walk and in view of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. We do not consider that this adequately seeks to address the conservation and enhancement of the unique character and Special Qualities of the landscape. Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 recognises that some change to the outstanding landscape of the Wye Valley is inevitable; however it needs to be carefully managed to sustain the distinctive landscape features and Special Qualities of the area. We recognise that Mobile phones have revolutionised modern life and that the topography and rurality of the AONB means that coverage is not consistent. There are already a number of examples of effective technical options and/or positioning of masts that have improve mobile phone coverage in the AONB without having significant negative impact on the landscape.</p> <p>The AONB Management Plan suggests that masts should use optimum designs or involve innovative solutions, such as incorporation in church towers or farm buildings, which when accompanied by adequate landscaping where appropriate, minimises the landscape impacts in the AONB. Similarly the AONB Management Plan suggests that mast sharing may be an option. Alternatively, there may be locations slightly further to the east or on the English side of the where a mast may be better screened by woodland. However, we failed to</p>	Pending	N/A

	<p>find any information within the application documents to demonstrate whether alternative sites had been considered and why this is the most appropriate site for the development. There needs to be some justification from the applicant that the site has been chosen from a rigorous assessment of a selection of sites as having the least landscape and visual impact to meet the topographic requirements which would enable this technology to function effectively. Again, it is not clear what alternative designs or mitigation measures have been considered which result in this being the optimum solution.</p> <p>We therefore object to this application on the grounds that a mast in this location would have a significant detrimental impact on the Special Qualities and natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB. There are significant details lacking and the form and location of the development has not been adequately justified as being in the best location in the AONB. We consider that Monmouthshire County Council could be in contravention of Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 should they determine to approve this application.</p>		
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Forest of Dean District Council

Application details	AONB comments	Planning decision	Justification
None			