

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

April 2018 to March 2019

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Worcestershire County Council in the Wye Valley AONB – April 2018
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1. Introduction

Between April 2018 and March 2019, 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. 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 did not provide any comments on the strategic policy consultations for the areas falling within the Wye Valley AONB boundary. However, the AONB Manager provided evidence to 6 Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs): Ballingham, Bolstone and Hentland Group Parish, Brampton Abbots & Foy Group Parish, Goodrich & Welsh Bicknor Parish, Peterstow Parish and Ross-on-Wye Town.

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 2018-2019. Table 2, below, shows the breakdown of these applications by type of development.

Table 1 - Summary statistics for planning applications April 2018 to March 2019

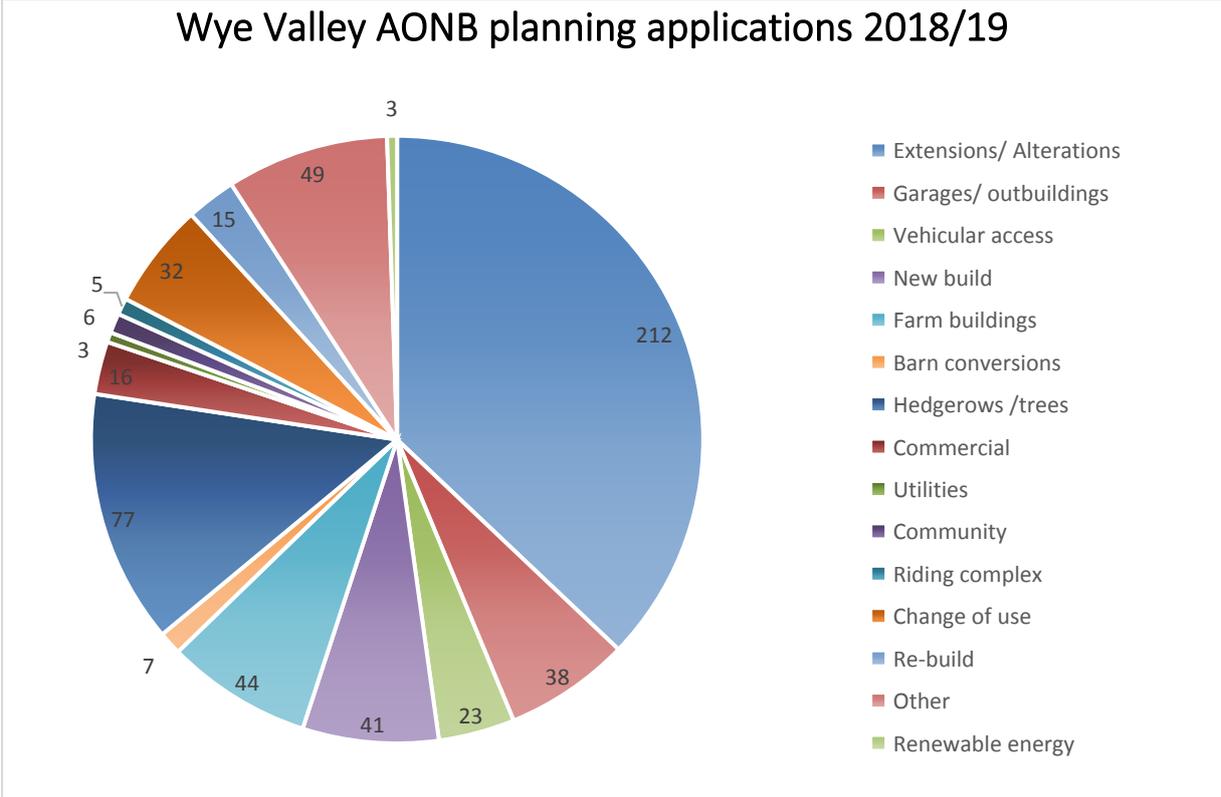
Local Authority	No. of applications registered	No. of applications considered relevant to the Wye Valley AONB	No. of applications on which WCC consulted the Unit	No. of responses submitted to the Planning Authority	No. of planning appeals
Herefordshire Council	316 (327)	177 (188)	10 (17)	2 (2)	(0)
Forest of Dean District Council	110 (85)	73 (50)	4 (2)	1 (0)	(0)
Monmouthshire County Council	145 (155)	92 (121)	2 (3)	3 (1)	(0)
Totals	571 (568)	342 (359)	16 (22)	3 (3)	(0)

(2017-18 figures in brackets)

There were 571 planning applications registered, based on the lists of applications provided by the Wye Valley AONB Unit between April 2017 and March 2018. This is consistent with figures from last year.

At 342, the number of applications identified as relevant for consideration because of potential impacts on the Wye Valley AONB very slightly decreased compared to the previous year, when 359 applications were considered.

Table 2. Breakdown of planning applications by type.



On 16 occasions, WCC consulted the AONB Unit on planning applications considered potentially detrimental. Following discussion with the AONB Manager, written responses were provided to three of these applications, which is the same level as last year.

The AONB Manager submitted 3 additional responses objecting to applications, including two in the setting of the AONB. A summary of the AONB Unit's representations, alongside the planning decision and extracts from the case officers' reports, can be found in Appendix 1.

The AONB Manager has also been invited to contribute comments for a number of pre-application enquiries with Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council.

4. Conclusions

This report covers the fourth year of the Worcestershire County Council consultancy work provided for the Wye Valley AONB Unit. The approach and success rates remain consistent with previous years of the service.

Appendix 1 Summary of Planning Applications - April 2018 to March 2019

Herefordshire Council

Application details	AONB comments	Planning decision	Justification
<p>P174625/F</p> <p>Proposed retention of an existing caravan to be used as accommodation for a farm worker. (Retrospective). (For DOC 3 and 5 see 190800)</p> <p>Tump Farm Fownhope Hereford Herefordshire HR1 4PJ</p>	<p>The application is unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact on the natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB. However currently the caravan is conspicuous from certain perspectives and should be better screened to fit into the landscape and to comply with the Fownhope Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Strategic Objective WV-D2 states “Encourage and support high standards of design, materials, energy efficiency, drainage and landscaping in all developments, including Permitted Development, to ensure greater sustainability and that they complement and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness including scale and setting and minimise the impact on the natural environment”. The need for this agricultural accommodation should also be strictly monitored in the event that the farming enterprise might change negating the necessity for the accommodation.</p>	<p>Approved with conditions</p>	<p>Recommendation that planning permission is granted with necessary conditions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landscape scheme - Landscape implementation scheme
<p>183187/O</p> <p>Proposed development of 9 new dwellings and access (Outline).</p> <p>Land South West of Wilton Lane, Wilton, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire</p>	<p><u>Objection</u></p> <p>The AONB Unit has major concerns regarding this proposal. The site is outside the settlement of Wilton and therefore in open countryside in the AONB....the proposed design creates an incongruous addition to Wilton and an even smaller incongruous and inefficient area of agricultural land.</p> <p>Recommendation that the Council consider refusal of the application which fails to conserve or enhance the Wye Valley AONB and the setting of Wilton Conservation Area.</p>	<p>Refused</p>	<p>The proposal fails to maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a highly sensitive and designated landscape. The proposals are incongruous and would result in harm to landscape character and visual amenity and the historic landscape setting of Ross on Wye and Wilton. As such the proposal is contrary to Herefordshire Core Strategy policy SS6, LD1 and LD3, the Wye Valley AONB</p>

			Management Plan and the relevant aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.
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Forest of Dean District Council

Application details	AONB comments	Planning decision	Justification
<p>P0307/18/FUL</p> <p>Change of use of agricultural land to a tourism site comprising of 9 camping pods, reception building and shower/washroom. Alterations to vehicular access and associated works.</p> <p>Land At Hewelsfield Off Mill Hill Brockweir NP16 7NW</p>	<p><u>Objection</u></p> <p>The Wye Valley AONB Unit, on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership, has significant concerns regarding the siting, scale and design of this development. The proposed development is in the Wye Valley AONB ‘Dean Edge Limestone Plateau’ Landscape Management Zone [LMZ]15. It is not clear whether the applicant has considered the impact of this proposal on the AONB. We fully endorse the comments of the Council’s Sustainability and Landscape Technician. If the development takes place in its current form it will irreversibly change the landscape character of this unique ‘common’. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 includes the Aim that “Sustainable tourism based upon the natural beauty and local distinctiveness of the AONB continues to enrich the lives of visitors, operators and employees while contributing positively to the conservation and enhancement of the area”.</p> <p>We believe the design and layout of the development is incongruous with the surrounding landscape and settlement pattern. Such a proposal at this location is likely to cause noise, light and traffic issues for the local community and visitors, creating a localised loss of tranquillity. According to our records the field was mapped as “native broadleaf woodland” 20 years ago and “continuous scrub & semi-natural broadleaf woodland” in our 2013 Phase 1 Habitat Survey. Previously it was probably species rich grassland, like most of the fields in Brockweir, Hewelsfield and St Briavels Common. The developer has already cleared most of the</p>	<p>Refused</p>	<p>The removal of roadside trees, the creation of a formal site entrance, and the presence of buildings, areas of hardstanding (even those to be created with gravel), paths (even if they were created with bark chippings, cars, lighting, and so on, would give the site a formal developed look. Such a look would do material harm to the tranquility and the rural character and appearance of the site and its surroundings, including the Wye Valley AONB.</p>

	<p>trees from the woodland/field. The new proposed access will remove a section of the roadside wall/hedge and trees. The AONB Management Plan identifies a number of Special Qualities of the AONB which include woodland [SQ2], species rich grassland [SQ4], Boundary habitat diversity & connectivity, e.g. between grassland & woodland..., hedges &/or drystone walls, lanes, banks, verges [SQ5] and Overall sense of tranquillity, sense of remoteness and aturalness/wildness [SQ12].</p> <p>Strategic Objective WV-D3 in the AONB Management Plan states “Resist inappropriate development which will create a persistent and dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and/or if it damages Special Qualities in the AONB, including through high levels of noise and/or light pollution or any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or other sites designated as environmentally important”.</p> <p>Consequently we would encourage the Council to refuse this development in its current location and form.</p>		
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Monmouthshire County Council

Application details	AONB comments	Planning decision	Justification
<p>DM/2019/00013</p> <p>Outline planning application for up to 200 homes including public open space; new vehicular, pedestrian & cycle accesses; and associated landscaping & engineering works.</p>	<p><u>Objection</u></p> <p>The site of this proposed development abuts the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We object to this application which inconsistently addresses the setting of the Wye Valley AONB.</p> <p>Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 10, 2018) para 6.3.5 states “Planning authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to National Parks and AONB purposes. This duty applies in relation to all activities affecting National Parks and AONBs, whether those activities lie within, or in the setting of, the designated areas.... and planning authorities should have regard to their identified special qualities in the exercise of their functions and any relevant management plans.” Para 6.3.8 states “National Parks and AONBs are of equal status in terms of landscape and scenic beauty, and must both be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate developments.”</p>	<p>Pending</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	<p>Monmouthshire LDP Policy LC4 – Wye Valley AONB (last sentence) states “Development proposals that are outside the AONB but would detract unacceptably from its setting will not be permitted.” LDP para 6.3.39 states “...Proposals for development within, or affecting the setting of, the AONB should have regard to the strategic objectives and policy proposals set out in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and seek to conserve and enhance the unique character and special qualities of the landscape.”</p> <p>The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2015-2020 Strategic Objective WV-D3 states “Resist inappropriate development which will create a persistent and dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and/or if it damages Special Qualities in the AONB, including through high levels of noise and/or light pollution or any SAC, SPA or Ramsar site or other sites designated as environmentally important.”</p> <p>The site abuts the AONB and is in the setting of the Caerwent Limestone Plateau / Hinterlands Landscape Management Zone (LMZ16) with the following relevant Landscape Features identified in the AONB Management Plan, cross referenced to the Special Qualities [SQ]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gently rolling landscape with occasional narrow winding steep-sided valleys [SQ1 – Overall Landscape] - Ancient, semi-natural and mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland [SQ2 - Woodlands] - Mixture of arable and pastoral farming with traditional farmsteads and large country estates [SQ20 – Vernacular architecture] - Remnant parkland of large country estates [SQ19 – Historic/registered parks] - Long views towards the Severn Estuary are possible [SQ11 – extensive & dramatic views] - Chepstow Racecourse an important landscape at a local level [SQ19 – Historic/registered parks] <p>The DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT refers to “A landscaping buffer with the AONB”. The list of “The Key features of the site” similarly reference “A landscape corridor and public open space along the western edge of the development to incorporate the PROW”. The CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES PLAN demarcates a “15m</p>		
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	<p>buffer to the Broadleaved woodland” in the AONB and a further (notably lesser) “sensitive buffer” along the rest of the AONB boundary inside the red line but with the footpath curving away into the AONB. The applicant states that the “Constraints & Opportunities Plan has been prepared for the site which has been used to shape the development concept”. However, the ‘Landscape & GI Parameter Plan’ shows a 15m buffer to the Broadleaved woodland in the AONB at the northern half of the border and no ‘sensitive buffer’ but a 20m incursion into the AONB along the southern half, with the footpath aligned through it, and outside of the red line. The UK Planning Portal definition of a ‘buffer zone’ is “An area of land separating certain types of development from adjoining sensitive land uses”.</p> <p>However the placement of this “buffer with the AONB” along the site’s western boundary is completely inconsistent. The 20m strip outside the development site and inside the AONB is not buffering the AONB but enforcing a change of land-use in the AONB to pursue development up to the AONB boundary. The applicant seems to perfectly understand the concept of a buffer in the CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES PLAN and in the ‘Landscape & GI Parameter Plan’ for the woodland in the AONB but ignores it for the open field in the AONB. This does not consistently “afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate developments.”</p> <p>The Landscape & Visual Appraisal fails to address views from the AONB along the public footpath along the western edge of the site along the boundary of the AONB. This is a popular route for locals accessing the countryside and the AONB. The avoidance or omission of this view (or views) is a significant oversight, where views from the AONB will be highly impacted by the development.</p> <p>There is no clarification of the impact of the 9m roof heights and visibility of the housing in relation to the 94m contour and the retained grassland and field. Some photomontages of the roof lines and better drawings than those on page 19 of the DAS are needed to adequately assess the landscape and visual impact of the development from a number of viewpoints, including Eagles Nest and the footpath along the AONB boundary.</p> <p>The inconsistencies and omissions when dealing with the AONB are such that we cannot adequately ensure that the development will not have significant detrimental damage to the natural and scenic beauty</p>		
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	<p>of the Wye Valley AONB.</p> <p>Consequently we recommend that the Council refuse this application for 200 houses in the setting of the AONB.</p>		
<p>DC/2017/00868</p> <p>A telecoms mast.</p> <p>Tump Farm, Whitebrook NP25 4TU</p>	<p><u>Objection</u></p> <p>The revised application remains in the original location but with a reduced height and structure of a 10 meter monopole. We still have considerable concerns about this proposed development in this location. The location remains in an exposed position in open countryside on the lip of the valley in the Wye Gorge Landscape Management Zone (LMZ) beside the regional recreational asset of the Wye Valley Walk and in view of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. Both these routes and the LMZ are identified as Special Qualities in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2015-2020. We acknowledge that the reduced height and monopole design would be less harmful than the previously proposed 15m lattice tower. However we do not consider that this modification in design and scale adequately addresses the impact on the conservation and enhancement of the unique character and Special Qualities of the landscape at this location. The applicant has provided an assessment of alternative sites that is based largely on cost and convenience rather than mitigation of landscape impact in a nationally designated protected landscape.</p> <p>The currently proposed landscaping is a native hedge 1.75m tall and about 1.5m wide/deep around the compound. We do not believe this is adequate to mitigate the impact on the natural beauty of the area. To conserve and enhance the landscape at this site and minimise the visual impact of the mast there needs to be a significant amount of screening of the site from all angles. A belt of native tree and shrub planting needs to surround the site to a depth of about 4meters. This should connect with / extend from the adjacent wooded area to the south and connect with the roadside hedgerow to the north, encircling the compound and help screen, over time, the site from the A466 and Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. Additionally the roadside hedgerow needs gapping up with inclusion of at least two hedgerow trees in order to help screen the mast and compound from the Wye Valley Walk, whilst also consolidating the 'backdrop' of the mast. We appreciate this will necessitate more land-take but this is the minimum necessary to mitigate the impact if the mast, both locally and in views.</p>	<p>Withdrawn and new site proposed</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>DM/2018/01573</p> <p>Retrospective Planning Application for field gates</p> <p>Billets Field near Devauden</p>	<p><u>Objection</u></p> <p>The Retrospective Planning Application is adjacent to the boundary of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is therefore in the setting of the AONB. This application arises because the restoration of the sites was not completed after the removal of the temporary telecommunications mast. The incomplete restoration of the site is in conflict with the purpose of the AONB. Planning Policy Wales (2016) states:</p> <p>5.3.5 The primary objective for designating AONBs is the conservation and enhancement of their natural beauty. Development plan policies and development management decisions affecting AONBs should favour conservation of natural beauty, although it will also be appropriate to have regard to the economic and social well-being of the areas. Local authorities, other public bodies and other relevant authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to AONB purposes.</p> <p>5.3.6.... In National Parks and AONBs, development plan policies and development management decisions should give great weight to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of these areas.</p> <p>5.3.7 The duty to have regard to National Park and AONB purposes applies to activities affecting these areas, whether those activities lie within or outside the designated areas.</p> <p>We would therefore recommend that the application is refused and the gates removed and the hedgerow restored in the interests of conserving and enhancing the Wye Valley AONB and its the setting.</p>	<p>Pending</p>	
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