

## PLANNING GUIDANCE AND POSITION STATEMENTS

### **Purpose**

To endorse draft Position Statements for wider public consultation, which intend to establish the position of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership on key issues affecting the area, helping guide the Partnership and relevant planning bodies and decision-making bodies to articulate how the AONB designation should be protected, conserved and enhanced.

To be made aware of upcoming Planning guidance which seeks to aid all interested parties to uphold and deliver the vision and priorities contained within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan.

### **Recommendations**

That the JAC:

- a) Discuss, amend (if necessary) and endorse the 'Housing in the Wye Valley AONB and its Setting' Position Statement, and its associated Appendices, as a consultation draft;
- b) Discuss, amend (if necessary) and endorse the 'Landscape-led Development' Position Statement, and its associated Appendices, as a consultation draft;
- c) Agree that if future amendments are required, as necessary, that these can be made by Wye Valley AONB Unit staff, in consultation with the Wye Valley AONB Manager, unless materially significant, in which case they will be brought to the JAC for further consideration and final approval;
- d) Agree a formal review date of both Position Statements to take place every five years unless otherwise amended.

### **For Information**

That the JAC be made aware that guidance and associated Position Statements on Renewables and Dark Skies intends to be presented at a future JAC meeting.

## **Key Issues**

- Currently, the AONB Partnership does not have Position Statements. Without them, there can be unnecessary pressure to accommodate unnecessary development.
- Position Statements provide further context, guidance and recommendations in relation to the specific Wye Valley AONB Management Plan Strategic Objectives and associated issues.
- The draft 'Housing in the Wye Valley AONB and its Setting' Position Statement advises housing development to be based on robust evidence of need arising from within the

Protected Landscape. Currently, assessment of housing need and housing requirements are based on local authority boundaries, not the AONB boundary. This could be avoided if 'housing need' and 'housing requirements' are clearly differentiated.

- The draft Landscape-led Position Statement advises that development within the Wye Valley AONB and, where relevant, in its setting, should be 'landscape-led'. Ideally, there should not have to be a binary choice between conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB and planning for and permitting new development. The aspiration should be to deliver new development in a way that is compatible with and positively contributes to the AONB as a nationally designated protected landscape.
- The draft Position Statements, if endorsed, will go out to formal consultation before being brought to the JAC for further consideration/final sign off.
- It is intended that guidance and associated Position Statements on Renewables and Dark Skies be presented at a future JAC meeting. The guidance documents will aim to promote good practice and assist those proposing new development in the AONB and its setting.

## **Reasons**

Position Statements establish the position of the Wye Valley AONB Partnership on key issues affecting the area, helping guide the Partnership and relevant plan-making and decision-making bodies to articulate how the AONB designation can be protected, conserved and enhanced. The Position Statements provide further context, guidance and recommendations in relation to the specific Management Plan Strategic Objectives and associated issues. They are not creating new policies. Adoption of Position Statements has become increasingly commonplace across Nationally Protected Landscapes, including the Cotswolds AONB and Malvern Hills AONB.

## **Implications**

It is intended that both draft Position Statements be published for wider consultation with relevant stakeholders and interested parties.

The consultation period will be eight-weeks to commence as soon as reasonably possible should both draft Position Statements (and their Appendixes) be endorsed. All local authorities have been made aware of these draft Position Statements prior to this meeting.

Consideration should be given to how the AONB Partnership monitors development management decision-making within the Wye Valley AONB, to help demonstrate the effectiveness of the Position Statements and other policy and guidance in supporting Local Planning Authority decision-making.

### *Position Statement on Housing in the Wye Valley AONB and its Setting*

The over-arching principle of this Position Statement is for housing development in the Wye Valley AONB and its setting to be based on robust evidence of need arising from within the nationally designated Protected Landscape. Currently, assessment of housing need and housing requirements are based on local authority boundaries, not the AONB boundary. Accordingly, current reliance on local authority housing need figures solely means there can be unnecessary pressure to accommodate residential development from the wider area within the AONB boundary. This could be avoided if 'housing need' and 'housing requirements' are clearly differentiated.

In effect, the recommendations should help to filter, or screen, the initial local authority housing need figure down to a more appropriate level of housing provision within the Wye Valley AONB. This will particularly apply when accommodating unmet needs, affordable housing, local connection, rural housing need surveys, choice based letting systems and second homes. Location & Design are also considered, particularly recognising climate change and needing to promote sustainable development.

### *Position Statement on Landscape-led Development*

The over-arching principle of this Position Statement is that development within the Wye Valley AONB and, where relevant, in its setting, should be 'landscape-led'. The AONB Partnership recognises that there are a range of other considerations that must be weighted in the planning balance, including climate and ecological emergencies, and meeting housing needs and economic growth. However, there should not have to be a binary choice between conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB and permitting new development. The aspiration should be to deliver new development in a way that is compatible with, and positively contributes to, the AONB as a nationally designated protected landscape.

The draft Position Statement intends to provide a more balanced stance. A landscape-led approach should also consider all the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the Wye Valley AONB. In principle, the landscape-led approach is applicable to all development in the Wye Valley AONB and its setting, albeit to a degree that is proportionate to the nature, scale, setting and potential impact of the proposed development. Recommendations are made in relation to strategic and neighbourhood planning, development management and in relation to Major, EIA development and conserving and enhancing natural beauty on-site.

### *Renewables & Dark Skies Position Statements and Guidance*

It is for the JAC to note for information that guidance and associated Position Statements on Renewables and Dark Skies intends to be presented at a future JAC meeting. The purpose of the guidance documents intend to promote good practice and to assist anyone who is proposing new

development in the AONB and its setting. Specifically, the guidance will outline how development can make a positive contribution to conserving the AONB landscape and its natural beauty, and awareness of its Features and Special Qualities.

## **Background**

Position Statements seek to help to deliver the strategic objectives and policies contained within the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026. The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan is a statutory document and a material consideration in planning decision-making. However, it is the adopted development plan policies of the relevant local authority that planning decisions are required to be taken in accordance with, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As such, within the planning system, the hierarchy is as follows:

- Local Planning Authority development plan and Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026.
- Position Statements and Guidance.

The two draft Position Statements being presented to the JAC have been prepared by the Wye Valley AONB Planning Officer. The two Position Statements relate to one another and are thus presented together.