

**A Summary of
Strategy and Planning Advisory Work
by Worcestershire County Council
in the Wye Valley AONB**

April 2015 to March 2016

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Strategic consultation work	3
3. Planning casework.....	3
Planning applications in the AONB.....	3
Objections	4
Planning Appeals.....	5
4. Conclusions.....	5
 Appendix 1 – Strategic consultations responded to April 2015 to March 2016.....	 6
Appendix 2 – Summary of written responses to planning applications April 2015 to March 2016.....	 7

1. Introduction

In April 2015, the Strategic Planning and Development Management teams at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) took on the consultancy role of advising the AONB Unit on strategic planning issues and development management. This report provides a summary of the main aspects of the work undertaken in 2015-2016.

2. Strategic consultation work

During the last monitoring year the AONB Unit responded to one consultation on a significant planning and strategy document.

Between 25th March and 20th May 2015, Forest of Dean District Council consulted on its Allocations Plan Publication Version March 2015. Three allocated sites fell within the AONB area. They were the Staunton Road site in Coleford, and the Former Tinplate Works and Land at Stowfield sites in Lydbrook. The AONB Unit supported these allocations in principle, as they would contribute to employment generation and economic growth of the local area. Comments were made on the plan to ensure that any future development in these areas had regard to the Wye Valley AONB landscape and special qualities. A brief summary of the Unit's response is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

3. Planning Casework

Planning applications in the AONB

Planning applications requiring consideration by the Wye Valley AONB Partnership were identified through lists of relevant applications sent to WCC by the AONB Unit on a weekly basis. Table 1 is a summary of the planning applications within the AONB for 2015-2016.

Table 1 - Summary statistics for planning applications April 2015 to March 2016

Local Authority	No. of applications registered	No. of site visits	No. of applications considered to be relevant to the Wye Valley AONB	No. of proposed responses drafted by WCC for the AONB to consider**
Herefordshire Council	226	0 (7)	149 (58)	10 (6)
Forest of Dean District Council	76	0 (2)	39 (16)	2 (1)
Monmouthshire District Council	144	0 (5)	86 (54)	5 (2)
Gloucestershire County Council	0	0 ()	0 (5)	0 (0)
Totals	446	0 (14)	274 (133)	17 (9)

(2014-15 figures in brackets)

** Only comprehensive draft responses are counted in these sums.

There were 446 planning applications registered, based on the lists of applications provided by the Wye Valley AONB Unit between April 2015 and March 2016. There is no comparable data from last year's assessment.

At 275, the number of applications identified as relevant for consideration because of potential adverse impacts on the Wye Valley AONB has more than doubled compared to the previous year, when only 133 applications were considered. This increase is consistent across all planning authorities. The reasons associated with this increase may include:

- the increase in the number of planning applications submitted to the Local Planning Authorities.
- the change to the applications recording system associated with the new consultation contract
- WCC officers' increased familiarity with the AONB landscape and relevant issues, which led to more detailed scrutiny of planning applications at the beginning of the reporting year, which has since levelled out with experience.

Whilst WCC has not completed any site visits in this reporting year, on a number of occasions we have asked the AONB Unit to undertake a site visit on our behalf.

WCC provided the AONB Unit with written responses to 16 planning application consultations. This is double the number of applications responded to last year, but is consistent with the numbers for the 2013-2014 reporting year.

It needs to be noted that over the last year WCC contacted the AONB Unit about a number of proposals which WCC felt had the potential to lead to negative impacts on the AONB, but was advised that no further action was required. These applications did not lead to a formal response and therefore they are not counted in this summary. WCC is exploring ways of recording these consultations for the benefit of next year's consultancy report.

Objections

The AONB Unit objected to three planning applications in the last monitoring year.

Two applications were refused by the Local Planning Authority (P1287/15/FUL in.... [insert LPA] and 151160 in....[insert LPA]) with the latter decision being challenged at appeal. The appeal was dismissed, and is discussed in the section below. On both occasions the negative visual impacts on the AONB landscape and heritage setting were quoted as one of the reasons for refusal.

One application was approved despite the AONB Unit's holding objection (DC/2015/01331 for *Installation of a 30.5m lattice telecoms tower at Near Pen-y-Garn Farm, Penallt, in Monmouthshire*). The AONB Unit placed a holding objection on the proposal until the applicant considered mitigation measures and alternative designs for the mast in order to minimise its impact on the Wye Valley AONB. The Officer Report states that:

"Given the position within the AONB the proposal has been advertised as major development in the local press accordingly. In terms of national interest, the proposal does form part of a wider project to deliver superfast broadband to private residents and business in rural areas. The project will also overlap with neighbouring local authorities and therefore given this regional importance it is considered to be justified". The Planning officer was also of the view that despite the mast introducing a strong vertical element onto a distinctive and prominent landform and causing a significant change to the landscape, *"it is considered that on balance a Green Infrastructure (GI) Bond would help to satisfactorily reduce the adverse impact on landscape*

character. A sum of £7000 would help to improve the connectivity between other important GI Assets, by improving the quality of the PROW network¹.

Planning Appeals

One planning appeal was made for an application objected to by the AONB Unit during the 2015/16 monitoring year.

Planning Appeal Ref. APP/W1850/W/15/3135704 related to application no. 151160, for the proposed retention of existing hard surface and driveway for storage of sugar beet and straw at land adjacent To Home Farm, Pencraig, Ross-on-Wye. The appeal was **dismissed** on 1 April 2016.

The Planning Inspector stated that the main issues in this case were the effect of the scheme on the character and appearance of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the impact on the setting of nearby heritage assets. The Appeal Decision letter included the following reasons for refusal:

"The effect on the AONB

3. The hardstanding and roadway were installed as a temporary measure during works by a statutory undertaker and the land is due to be reinstated to its original state as an agricultural field. They are in an area of attractive countryside and are very noticeable from the lane which leads to Goodrich and, beyond, to the River Wye. They intrude into a park-style landscape of agricultural land with isolated trees, and have the effect of despoiling it by introducing a large, flat, hardsurfaced feature. In addition, they are sited on the top of a narrow ridge; vehicles such as lorries and agricultural plant associated with delivering and collecting produce would be seen on the skyline from lower positions, and would be widely visible in the landscape from higher vantage points.

4. The National Planning Policy Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs. Core Strategy Policies SS6 and LD1 seek to conserve and enhance landscapes and the AONB. In this case the scheme would significantly harm the AONB and would be contrary to these policies".

Conclusions

This was the first year that Worcestershire County Council had provided consultancy to the Wye Valley AONB. Over the last year, WCC officers have developed their knowledge base and increased their familiarity and confidence in responding to strategy documents and planning application consultations on behalf of the Wye Valley AONB. This has resulted in a more targeted approach as this consultancy contract has progressed. We expect this trend to continue over the next consultancy period.

¹ <http://idox.monmouthshire.gov.uk/WAM/doc/Report-384927.pdf?extension=.pdf&id=384927&appid=1001&location=VOLUME4&contentType=application/pdf&pageCount=1&sid=>

Appendix 1 – Summary of responses to strategic consultations in the period April 2015 – March 2016

Consulting Authority	Consultation Document	Summary of Unit Response
National Consultations		
None		
County or Unitary level consultations		
None		
District Level Consultations		
Forest of Dean District Council	Allocations Plan Publication Version	<p>We note that the following sites allocated in the Plan fall within the AONB area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy AP 61 - Staunton Road, Coleford Employment / Hotel Site • Policy AP 82 - Former Tinplate Works, Lydbrook • Policy AP 17 - Land At Stowfield, Lydbrook <p>The Partnership supports the above policies in principle as contributing to employment generation and economic growth of the local area. All these locations are on previously development land and should not impose further on the outstanding landscape of the Wye Valley.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, we feel that Policy AP82 Former Tinplate Works, Lydbrook should also refer to the Wye Valley AONB and needs to respect its landscapes and contribute to the wider role of the Wye Valley AONB.</p> <p>In regard to Land At Stowfield, Lydbrook we support the redevelopment/regeneration of the former cable works for mixed uses such as residential, employment, recreation facilities or tourist accommodation as proposed in the Plan. We feel that any works on this site should contribute to the wider landscape, cultural heritage and activities of the Wye Valley AONB. Development proposals should explore the possibility of enhancing access to the River Wye and restoration of the old railway viaduct adjacent to this site to encourage water-based recreation. Proposals should also consider how to increase connectivity to this riverine area and maintain and enhance its attractiveness, for the benefit of future site occupiers and visitors to the Wye Valley.</p>
Neighbourhood Plans		
None		

Appendix 2 Summary of Planning Applications with written responses - April 2015 to March 2016

Herefordshire Council

Application Details	AONB Comments	Planning Decision
151160 Proposed retention of existing hard surface and driveway for storage of sugar beet and straw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objection The site is in an elevated position with expansive views in all directions. This proposal is likely to create a dominant feature out of keeping with the landscape of the AONB and damage special qualities in the AONB, particularly SQ 11: Picturesque, extensive & dramatic views. This is contrary to the AONB Management Plan Strategic Objective WV-D4. Section 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires "great weight" to be given to AONB status. No such justification appears to have been provided in support of the application. The existing hard surface and driveway were installed by National Grid to for a time limited period in the national interest, with appropriate mitigation and compensation. Part of that mitigation would be the reversion of this site to arable agriculture. Recommend refusal. However, if the council is minded to grant permission we request that a condition is put in place requiring a landscaping scheme to be implemented. 	Refused (this application was appealed – appeal dismissed)
Land adj. Home Farm, Pencraig, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 6HR		
151264 To convert an existing barn to an eco-dwelling at Losito Stud Barn at Losito Stud, Harris Lodge, Whitchurch, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6EG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not considered that the proposed eco-dwelling would have an adverse impact on the character of the AONB in this location, providing that the design is of a similar scale to that of the existing barn. Request that the AONB Partnership is consulted on any Reserved Matters application received. 	Refused
151502 Sanctuary Cottage, Hoarwithy, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR2 6QQ Proposed erection of detached garage and railings to boundary with highway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application for detached garage and removing boundary vegetation and replacing with railings. Concern that railings are inappropriate in this location and would be detrimental to the AONB, they would also increase visibility of the proposed garage which would otherwise be reasonably well screened by the existing vegetation. Response drafted requesting retention of vegetation 	Approved

<p>151627</p> <p>Proposed erection of two detached cottages with new vehicular access</p> <p>Land adjoining Bryants Court Cottage, Goodrich, Herefordshire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application for outline permission to develop 2 houses on the edge of Goodrich village. The proposal might be acceptable but concern over views from public footpaths to north and south of the site, and whether the development would break the skyline in views from the west (A40). Response drafted to request Visual Assessment. 	Approved
<p>152287</p> <p>Proposed 9 no. two bedroom dwellings, turning, car parking and associated works.</p> <p>Land at Kirby's Yard, Old Monmouth Road, Whitechurch, Hereford, HR9 6DJ</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AONB Partnership consider the proposal largely acceptable, and recognise it as a visual improvement to the current structure. However, an appropriate landscaping scheme is needed to soften the visual impact on the landscape of the AONB at this location. A carefully designed landscaping scheme should be provided for this site. In particular, a screen of native trees should be planted alongside the proposed timber noise barrier fence along the A40 to enhance the existing treeline. The trees should be allowed to mature and form a single corridor with the existing trees along this stretch of the road. This will subsequently enhance the biodiversity, visual screening and landscape in this location as well as enhancing the reduction of noise & dust from the dual carriageway for the proposed dwellings. 	Withdrawn
<p>151752</p> <p>Proposed erection of 2 no new detached dwellings.</p> <p>Land adjacent to Seven Acres, Kings Caple, Herefordshire, HR1 4TZ</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership has no objection to this proposal subject to the applicant preserving the current mature tree cover on the site and ensuring that the development is sufficiently screened from wider views. From the information submitted by the applicant it is not obvious if the existing tree cover is planned to be preserved. The site has a number of mature large and smaller trees which must not be removed as part of this development. They create a natural boundary between the settlement of Kings Caple and open countryside and are an important part of the local landscape. The two proposed dwellings should be nested amongst these features to minimise the visual impact of new structures. Where trees will become part of the private gardens, their preservation in perpetuity should be ensured through the use of Tree Preservation Orders. 	Approved
<p>152399</p> <p>Proposed extension to existing agricultural building</p> <p>Little Canwood, Canwood Road, Checkley, Herefordshire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant proposes an extension which account to approximately 50% of the existing agricultural building. This is in addition to another large agricultural building sited to the South-East from this structure. The site lies in the open countryside and whilst there are a few building structures in close proximity they are all well screened by the existing trees and hedgerows. The Partnership would see this extension acceptable subject to the landscaping plan which aims to screen the scale of the structure from the immediate and long distance views. In particular, an extensive screening with the native hedgerows and trees to the north and west of the building will be required. 	Approved

153616 Proposed development of five dwellings with new accesses, drainage, woodland and hedgerow planting. Land south east of The Old Vicarage, Holme Lacy, Herefordshire, HR2 6LU	<p>The biggest drawback is the lack of diversity whether it comes to the development layout or design. Home Lacy seems like a mixture of both ribbon and clustered houses of varied styles and periods. There are number of homes placed alongside main roads but they are intersected with smaller internal roads. I think this should be reflected in the site design to avoid it looking like an "estate". The proposed site have a repetitive feel of "dwelling, garage – dwelling, garage" site layout. This should also be rethought.</p> <p>The site design could be improved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some diversity in the design between the buildings • The design seems quite blocky but perhaps some diversity in the roofline and structure could enhance this development <p>The proposed blocky windows and doorframes which are only decorative features but they don't improve the appearance but rather make houses look heavy in this location.</p>	Approved
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Forest of Dean District Council

Application Details	AONB Comments	Planning Decision
<p>P1287/15/FUL</p> <p>Erection of an agricultural shed</p> <p>Land At Wall Weir, Miss Graces Lane, Tidenham Chase, Chepstow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objection • The Photographs and Landscape Assessment submitted by the applicant underplays the sensitive location of the site. The Partnership would like to see consideration of the impact of this proposal from various viewpoints (short and long-distance) from which the new structure may be visible. • The AONB Partnership would like to see information on the size, materials and placing of these panels as well as evidence that they are not going to impact on long-distance views within the AONB. • In respect of this application, there is no information on whether any external lighting is proposed. The Partnership would like the applicant to clarify this and, if lighting is proposed, details of the type and placing of these lights should be provided. • The Partnership notes that the site is proposed to be used for increased commercial activity such as timber production and livestock rearing. We would like to see some indication of the resultant volume of traffic and potential business visits to be able assess any potential impact on tranquility. 	Refused
<p>P1287/15/FUL (Revalidation)</p> <p>Erection of an agricultural shed</p> <p>Land At Wall Weir, Miss Graces Lane, Tidenham Chase, Chepstow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New information did not address the AONB points as above • The response resubmitted 	Refused

<p>P1428/15/AG</p> <p>Erection of an open fronted barn to house machinery/plant to maintain grounds</p> <p>Hudnalls Farm The Common St Briaveis Lydney Gloucestershire GL15 6SQ</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The barn is approximately 126 m2. It is proposed to have a light colour steel roof. The barn is located on the slope and will potentially impact on the wider landscape of the AONB. Response drafted to request the dark colour of the roofing material. 	Refused
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Monmouthshire County Council

Application Details	The AONB Comments	Planning Decision
<p>DC/2015/01331</p> <p>Installation of 30.5m lattice telecoms tower to supply broadband to the surrounding area, as part of a contract awarded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to supply superfast broadband to a number of rural areas in Monmouthshire, where traditional means are unavailable.</p> <p>Near Pen-y-Garn Farm Penallt NP25 4AP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holding objection The application appears to fail to have regard to the Strategic Objectives and policy proposals set out in the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan and does not adequately seek to address the conservation and enhancement of the unique character and special qualities of the landscape. We 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. Mast sharing may be an option. We failed to find any information within the application documents to demonstrate which alternative sites had been considered and why this is the most appropriate site for the development. It is not clear what alternative designs or mitigation measures have been considered which result in this being the optimum solution. We do not observe that any aspects of this application assist in the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area. We also consider that, in line with Policy EP4 of the Monmouthshire County Council Adopted Local Development Plan 2011-2021, a mast of this height within the AONB is major development which requires a comprehensive justification in the national interest. 	Approved
<p>DC/2015/00470</p> <p>Erection of a timber stable block, with field enclosures.</p> <p>Stanley Cottage, Gethley Road, Parkhouse NP25 4PU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We consider that some improvements could be made to the proposed scheme to reduce its impact on the landscape. We consider that the building may be better located slightly to the north/north east in the 'bend' of the field and tree-line with existing mature trees on at least two sides. We note the proposed hedge planting but consider that a landscaping plan should be required prior to determining the application. The proposed external lighting, if it is necessary, should be reduced to an absolute minimum and we would recommend a condition relating to lighting on site. 	Approved

<p>DC/2015/00097</p> <p>Development of 9 affordable and 6 private dwellings together with new accesses, car park for Trellech Primary School and ancillary works.</p> <p>Land at Monmouth Road/Greenway Lane Trellech NP25 4PA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership is concerned with the impact that this development might have on long-distance views and the wider landscape of the AONB. In particular, we are concerned about the northern edge of the site being visible from Monmouth Road. The Partnership would like to see a more in-depth visual assessment submitted for this site which considers both short and long distance views towards the development and identifies how this visual impact is going to be mitigated through site design and landscaping. We welcome the retainment of the central part of the site as public open space, we are concerned with the size of some of the dwellings on part of the site adjacent to Greenway Lane. As indicated, the dwellings, associated infrastructure, car parking and garages will create extensive areas of hard surfacing and materials that may benefit from being 'broken up' by an increase in structural planting and green spaces between the dwellings. The Partnership would like to see this site developed in a way which preserves the village/rural feel, which could be achieved through the introduction of further landscaping, including locally distinctive trees and hedgerows within the development. 	<p>Approved</p>
<p>DC/2015/00097 (revalidation)</p> <p>Development of 9 affordable and 6 private dwellings together with new accesses, car park for Trellech Primary School and ancillary works.</p> <p>Land at Monmouth Road/Greenway Lane Trellech NP25 4PA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The additional information provided did not address the AONB comments. The response as above still stands. 	<p>Approved</p>
<p>DC/2015/01336</p> <p>Proposed change of use from the storage and maintenance of commercial vehicles, to the storage and repair of light motor vehicles. Storage and repair of up to two HGV motor vehicles and a trailer. Retention of a portable office, ancillary parking areas and vehicle wash area (Revised scheme).</p> <p>Land and existing Workshops, New Barn Workshop Site, St Avans, Chepstow, NP16 6HE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the application represents an improvement over the existing situation and should not have a significant impact on AONB. Significant planning history on this site, but this application could regularise and improve the situation if properly implemented 	<p>Pending</p>