

RE: Wiltshire Core Strategy - Statement of Community Involvement Consultation 2015.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has recently responded separately in respect of the Core Strategy Partial Review.

The Board does note that the SCI consultation version is substantially a repeat of the previous version of the SCI.

However, the Board considers that the SCI should now be updated to make reference to the progress made through the Core Strategy in terms of revising and improving text and policies to make greater reference to the three AONBs (Cotswolds, North Wessex Downs and Cranborne Chase) in particular through Core Policy 51 and its supporting text.

The AONBs also have established protocols with their Local Authorities and Statutory Bodies, including Natural England and Heritage England, to share decisions, policies and guidance.

In respect of the representations made by the AONBs, the Core Strategy Inspector within his report specifically stated:

“Based upon the discussion at the hearings and the submissions made, it is apparent that all parties need to maintain a constructive dialogue to ensure a common understanding and compatibility of approach towards the AONBs and new development proposals. Whilst further detailed matters are addressed below, the modified CS at a strategic level takes an approach towards such sensitive areas that is sufficiently consistent with national policy and is justified.” (paragraph 30).

Accordingly the following recommendations are made to the SCI consultation:

Recommendation:

- **That the SCI is amended to specifically refer to the partnership approach between Wiltshire Council and the Cotswolds, North Wessex Downs and Cranborne Chase AONBs;**
- **Accordingly within the SCI, reference the joint engagement, consultations and protocols between the Council and the AONBs in producing guidance and policy and in the decision making process;**
- **There is a legal duty under Section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000 to have regard to the purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty in relation to any function within or affecting land in an AONB;**
- **By referencing the above within the SCI, this will assist in the Council discharging its legal requirement (as advised within DEFRA and Natural England guidance on AONBs).**

The above has been copied to the North Wessex Downs and Cranborne Chase AONBs for their own comments.

As part of the response to the Core Strategy Partial Review, the Board has recommended a further meeting is arranged between AONB Officers and Council Officers to discuss the CS Partial Review and the SCI. This could lead to an agreed Statement of Common Ground being produced as part of the CS Partial Review process between the Council and the AONBs.