

Chisledon Parish Council meeting with NWD AONB – 3/12/18 – SHEELA sites

- North Wessex Downs was designated as an AONB in 1972 due to its rich chalk landscape
- An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a landscape which is of an outstanding and distinctive character, creating a natural beauty that is so precious it is in the nations interest to safeguard it.
- Under Section 83 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 the Local Authorities have a statutory “*Duty of Regard*” to the conservation and enhancement of protected landscapes.
- AONB designation does not mean that the area is to be preserved with no development or change being allowed, but instead requires conservation and enhancement, it is about ensuring that the right development is in the right location. In terms of strategic development sites such as the New Road site, allocations should first be considered outside of the AONB and only then if no sites can be found that sites within the AONB can be considered.
- There is no presumption in favour of development within AONBs as they are considered as assets of particular importance under Para 11 part d)i. and footnote 6 of the NPPF.
- Other landscape/housing considerations within the NPPF are para 8, 20, 68, 72, 170 and 172. There are other polices also but they relate to more detailed planning applications and not the plan making process which is currently under way by Swindon Borough Council.
- A major application would have to demonstrate special circumstances under para 172 of the NPPF, which the AONB does not consider could be achieved in terms of benefits not outweighing landscape harm.
- Character can be described as open landscape structure, without local pattern or detail, results in an open character, in stark contrast to the intimate landscape of the scarp and the drama of the downs.
- Currently the AONB has not objected to the principle of development at Hodsons Road, but as it is likely to be major development, special circumstances must be demonstrated under para 172 of the NPPF.
- The AONB has strongly objected to the 2 New Road sites and considers that these should be rejected under the SHELAA process. 400 dwellings would be the second largest proposed allocation seen in the NWD, the larger 1000 homes at Harwell campus in Oxfordshire was rejected at the local plan examination by the Planning Inspector in 2016.
- There are important outward views towards the Ridgeway and Skyline which forms part of the special qualities of the AONB, which would be lost if any part of the site were to be developed.
- A settlements character in many cases depends critically on the presence of green land within or adjoining it. Therefore, a site’s location within an assumed boundary or within the visual built envelope of a settlement may not always make it suitable for development if it is of landscape, heritage or open space value.

- The current parcels of open countryside due to their open and gently sloping topography merging with the wider open countryside provides a sense of separation and spaciousness which reinforces its separation from the built environment and enhances the experience of tranquillity.
- Burderop Park must also be considered in terms of the net gain of housing that the parish has already taken, this site had an advantage in that it was brownfield and given the issues with Swindon 5-year land supply, it would be of benefit in bringing housing forward with the 5-year plan period. Furthermore the allocation at the tip of Badbury Park for 300 additional dwellings in place of the business use should be taken into account.