

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING POSITION STATEMENTS

Summary: To provide an update on progress regarding consultation and plans to finalise the Position Statements for Board adoption.

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the update.

Report by: John Mills – Planning & Landscape Lead

Background

1. The draft Planning & Development and Housing Position Statements were presented to the Executive Committee in November 2021. We subsequently consulted our 15 local authorities, and other key stakeholders, on the draft position statements for an eight week period from 27 November 2020 to 22 January 2021.

Consultation responses - summary

2. As of 16 February 2021, we have received consultation responses from nine of the local authorities. In addition, four local authorities have indicated that they will respond by 19 February. To-date, we have not had a consultation response, or proposed response date, from two of our local authorities. See Appendix 1 for further details.
3. We have also received consultation responses from Natural England, CPRE (Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire in a combined response), Mendip Hills AONB and the Friends of the West Oxfordshire Cotswolds. The position statements were also discussed at a meeting of the South East Protected Landscapes Planning Officers' Group in January 2021.

Consultation feedback

4. We have had some very positive feedback on the position statements. For example, Natural England stated that *'these position statements along with the appendices, that hold key information, are so useful that it would be beneficial (if practical) to have some training sessions/presentations to raise awareness of the documents'*. Mendip Hill AONB stated that *'having a suite of Position Statements across the AONBs such as this, would be the gold standard to aspire to help conserve and enhance our protected landscapes'*.
5. Four of the local authorities have indicated that they broadly support the position statements, albeit with some concerns and / or suggested amendments. However, two (Bath & North East Somerset and Cotswold District) have explicitly stated that they would not be able to endorse the position statements as they currently stand.

Issues that need to be addressed

6. From the consultation responses, it is evident that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed in the next iteration of the position statements. These include:
 - Clearly acknowledging that the planning system is development-plan led.
 - Clarifying the relationship between the position statements and the local authority development plans.

- Providing greater clarity on the purpose and scope of the position statements, including their relationship with key issues such as the climate and ecological emergencies.
- Considering whether the position statements (particularly the Planning & Development Position Statement) should be re-named to more closely reflect the key principles that they are advocating and to help clarify the scope of the position statements.
- With regards to housing need, clearly acknowledging that the government's standard method for calculating housing need is the first step in the process for deciding how many homes need to be planned for.
- Reviewing recommendations that potentially go beyond the requirements of national planning policy and guidance to check if they are 'fit for purpose'. The recommendations relating to (housing) need arising within the Cotswolds National Landscape will require particularly close scrutiny.

Next steps

7. The positions statements will be updated, over the next few weeks, to take on board the consultation feedback. Updated versions of the position statements will be shared with the Planning and Infrastructure Working Group (PIWG) during week commencing 1 March and discussed at a PIWG meeting during week commencing 8 March.
8. The position statements will then be presented at the Board meeting on 24 March, with the recommendation that the Board adopts the position statements.

ANNEX 1. Summary of Consultation Responses

Local authorities that have responded: 9 (Bath & North East Somerset, Cherwell, Cotswold, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Stratford on Avon, West Oxfordshire, Worcestershire, Wychavon)

Local authorities that have indicated that a response will be submitted by 19 February: 3 (Cheltenham, South Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury).

Local authorities that have not provided a consultation response or indicated a likely response date: 3 (Stroud, Wiltshire, Warwickshire).

Local authorities that used the consultation questionnaire: 4 (Cherwell, Stratford on Avon, Wychavon, Worcestershire).

Local authorities that have explicitly endorsed the position statements: 0.

Local authorities that have explicitly stated that they could not endorse the position statements as they currently stand: 2 (Bath & North East Somerset, Cotswold)

Local authorities that are broadly supportive (albeit with some concerns and / or suggested amendments): 5 (Cherwell, Stratford on Avon, West Oxfordshire, Wychavon)

Local authorities that have indicated a 'neutral' stance: 1 (Worcestershire)

Local authorities that have not indicated their level of support: 1 (Gloucestershire)

Other responses (N.B. These have all filled in the consultation questionnaires):

- CPRE (Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire combined response)
- Friends of West Oxfordshire Cotswolds
- Mendip Hills AONB
- Natural England