

## LANDSCAPE-LED DEVELOPMENT POSITION STATEMENT

**Summary:** To review and, if in agreement, adopt the Board's Landscape-Led Development Position Statement.

**Recommendation:** That the Board adopts the Landscape-Led Development Position Statement.

**Report by:** John Mills – Planning & Landscape Lead

### Background

1. The Landscape-Led Development Position Statement is the new name for what was previously called the draft Planning & Development Position Statement. The new name is explained below.
2. We consulted our 15 local authorities and other key stakeholders (including all Board members) on the draft Planning & Development Position Statement, together with the draft Housing Position Statement, for an eight week period from 27 November 2020 to 22 January 2021.
3. The Executive Committee was presented with an update on the draft position statements on 24 February 2021. Updated versions of the position statements were then presented to the Board's Planning & Infrastructure Working Group (PIWG) on 12 March. PIWG agreed that the position statements should be put forward for adoption at the Board meeting on 24 March.

### Consultation responses - summary

4. We have received consultation responses from thirteen of the local authorities. See Appendix 1 for further details.
5. We have also received consultation responses from Natural England, CPRE (Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire in a combined response), Mendip Hills AONB, the Friends of the West Oxfordshire Cotswolds and two Board members. The position statements were also discussed at a meeting of the South East Protected Landscapes Planning Officers' Group in January 2021.

### Consultation feedback

6. 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'*.
7. Six of the local authorities indicated that they broadly support the aspirations of the position statements, albeit with some concerns and / or suggested amendments. Some local authorities didn't indicate their level of support. However, two (Bath & North East Somerset and Cotswold District) explicitly stated that they would not be able to endorse the consultation-version of the position statements.

Issues that have been addressed

8. The consultation responses raised a number of issues, relating to both position statements, that we have worked hard to address in the current versions, including:
  - Clearly acknowledging that the planning system is development-plan led.
  - Clarifying the status of the position statements, including their relationship with development plans and with the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan.
  - 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.
  - Reviewing recommendations that potentially go beyond the requirements of national planning policy and guidance to check if they are 'fit for purpose'.
  
9. The previous iteration of this position statement addressed two over-arching principles:
  - Development within the Cotswolds National Landscape and, where relevant, in its setting, should be 'landscape-led'.
  - Development within the Cotswolds National Landscape should be based on robust evidence of local need arising within the National Landscape.
  
10. One of the most significant changes is that the position statement now just focusses on the first of these two principles, advocating a landscape-led approach to development.
  
11. Trying to cover both of these principles in one position statement was, on reflection, overly ambitious and overly complex. In addition, the 'Planning & Development' title potentially gave the impression that the position statement was trying to cover all aspects of planning and development, which was not the intention.
  
12. This change should help to ensure that the position statement is more focussed, more user-friendly and, ultimately, more useable.
  
13. The principle of development being based on robust evidence of need arising within the Cotswolds National Landscape will still be addressed in relevant position statements, such as the Housing Position Statement.
  
14. A more detailed summary of the consultation feedback and the changes that have been made to address this feedback is available on request.

Next steps

15. The position statement is now ready for adoption by the Board. The only work that is still needed, prior to publication, is some minor editing (for example, numbering paragraphs). Once the position statement has been adopted, we will circulate it to the local authorities and ask for them to formally endorse them. It is intended that the position statement will be a live document that can be updated as and when necessary.

**ANNEX 1. Summary of Consultation Responses**

Local authorities that have responded: 13 out of 15.

Local authorities that have not provided a consultation response: 2 (Wiltshire and Warwickshire).

Local authorities that used the consultation questionnaire: 6 (Cheltenham and Tewkesbury (in a combined response), 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 of the aspirations of the position statements (albeit with some concerns and / or suggested amendments): 6 (Cheltenham, Cherwell, Stratford on Avon, Tewkesbury, West Oxfordshire, Wychavon)

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

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