

DRAFT PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT POSITION STATEMENT

Summary: To provide the Executive Committee with the opportunity to discuss and comment on the draft Planning & Development Position Statement

Recommendation: That the Executive Committee notes the paper and provides feedback on the draft Position Statement.

Report by: John Mills – Planning & Landscape Lead

1. INTRODUCTION

- The draft Planning & Development Position Statement has been developed in order to help relevant stakeholders, particularly local planning authorities, ensure that development in the Cotswolds National Landscape and in its setting is delivered in a way that is compatible with – and positively contributes to - the purpose of designation (i.e. to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape).
- The Position Statement recognises that the National Landscape is a living and working landscape in which development is required in order to sustain thriving local communities. As such, it supports appropriate levels of development within this landscape.
- The Position Statement is underpinned by 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.
- However, it also recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where development is permitted that is not consistent with these principles.

2. PROGRESS TO-DATE

- Initial thinking on key principles and recommendations was presented to the Board’s Planning & Infrastructure Working Group (PIWG) and to the Executive Committee in September 2019. There have been subsequent discussions with the Board in December 2019, PIWG in January 2020 and Executive Committee in February 2020.
- At the time of the Executive Committee meeting in February 2020, it was anticipated that the Position Statement would be circulated externally for consultation in spring 2020, ready for adoption by the Board in June 2020.
- However, after the Covid-19 lockdown started in March 2020, I contacted the local authority officers to see if they would like the consultation to be postponed. They agreed that this would be best.
- Just prior to the lockdown, I did manage to have a meeting with officers from Cotswold District Council, who provided some very constructive feedback which has influenced the current tone and content of the Position Statement.

- In September 2020, I had a Zoom meeting with 13 officers from local authorities across the National Landscape to provide an initial 'heads-up' on the Position Statements ahead of the formal consultation. Again the feedback was very constructive and the meeting set a positive tone for the forthcoming consultation.

3. FEEDBACK TO-DATE AND HOW THIS HAS BEEN ADDRESSED

- The recommendations that have been made in previous Board papers (including PIWG, Executive Committee and full Board) have, for the most part, been endorsed at those meetings.
- One of the sticking points in those discussions was the question of whether we should specify rigid thresholds above which development proposals should be considered to be major development, in the context of paragraph 172 and footnote 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- This issue has now been comprehensively addressed in the Position Statement, particularly in Appendix 7, which provides a set of 'checklists' of major development considerations. The supporting text makes it very clear that the checklists aren't intended to set rigid criteria. Instead, they are simply intended to help guide the decision maker (i.e. the local planning authority, in most cases) through the process of deciding whether a proposed development constitutes major development.
- These discussions also raised the question of how topics that contribute to 'natural beauty', such as biodiversity, could be better integrated into the Position Statement. Again, it is hoped, that the checklists in Appendix 7 help to address this issue.
- With regards to feedback from external stakeholders, key considerations have include 'tone of voice' and the need to recognise that there may be (exceptional) circumstances in which it is appropriate to permit development that might have an adverse impact on the natural beauty of the National Landscape and / or would meet needs arising outside the National Landscape.
- Another key consideration for external stakeholders was that the Position Statement should be a useful document that provides 'added value'. Again, the checklists in Appendix 7 should help to achieve this.

4. NEXT STEPS

- It is anticipated that the formal consultation will begin in week commencing 23 November and run through until approximately 22 January 2021. It will then be presented to the PIWG in January, Executive Committee in February and to the Board, for adoption, in March 2021.