

**The Chilterns  
Conservation Board**  
The Lodge  
90 Station Road  
Chinnor  
Oxfordshire  
OX39 4HA



Contact: Lucy Murfett  
Tel: 01844 355507  
Fax: 01844 355501  
E Mail: [lmurfett@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:lmurfett@chilternsaonb.org)  
[www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

Chairman: Cllr Ian Reay  
Vice Chairman: Helen Tuffs  
Acting Chief Officer: Kath Daly

1<sup>st</sup> October 2015

Planning Policy Team  
Wycombe District Council

**By email only to:** [spatial\\_planning@wycombe.gov.uk](mailto:spatial_planning@wycombe.gov.uk)

My Ref.: Planning\Development Plans\Bucks\Wycombe DC\Bledlow cum Saunderton neighbourhood plan

Dear Policy Team,

**Consultation response – Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Area (August 2015)**

Having examined the above neighbourhood area application, the Board wishes to make the comments detailed in the attached Appendix 1 by way of response.

The Chilterns Conservation Board is a body that represents the interests of all those people that live in and enjoy the Chilterns AONB. It is made up of representatives nominated by the organisations listed in Appendix 2.

The attached response has been prepared under delegated powers and will be presented for approval at the next Chilterns Conservation Board Planning Committee. Should you require any further information do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

*Lucy Murfett*

**Lucy Murfett MRTPI  
Planning Officer  
For and on behalf of the Chilterns Conservation Board**



**Response of the Chilterns Conservation Board – Bledlow cum Saunderton Neighbourhood Area Consultation (August 2015)**

1. The Board is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Bledlow-cum-Saunderton neighbourhood area. It covers the whole parish which is the preferred unit for a neighbourhood area in a parished area under 61G(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. We note that over half of the proposed neighbourhood area (south of the Midshires Way and south of the Icknield Way) falls within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the area that is not designated AONB forms part of the setting of the Chilterns AONB. We also note that neighbourhood development plans are being prepared for the adjacent rural parishes of Chinnor to the west (in South Oxfordshire) and Longwick to the east.
2. The area overlaps (and is larger than) the area proposed for a Saunderton Village Plan (Area Action Plan), currently being tested by Wycombe District Council's Task and Finish Group. The Board does not consider that it makes sense to progress both plans simultaneously and would be happy to input to the Task and Finish Group's deliberations on this matter.
3. At this initial stage, we would like to offer some standard advice to the neighbourhood plan group about the purposes of AONB designation and the government policies that apply here. As a protected landscape, with equal planning status to National Parks, great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (set out in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework para 115<sup>1</sup>). Paragraphs 116 of the NPPF explains that:

“Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

  - the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
  - the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
  - any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.”
4. The Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan needs to have regard to

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/11-conserving-and-enhancing-the-natural-environment/>

national policy, including policy on AONBs, and be in general conformity with the strategic policies in Wycombe District Council's development plan, as these form some of the basic conditions against which neighbourhood plans are tested at examination.

5. Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council, like Wycombe District Council, is a public body subject to the duty in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Section 85 that “In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty”.<sup>2</sup>
6. The Chilterns Conservation Board will wish to stay involved and assist in the future with plan proposals as they develop, and comment on planning applications as they are submitted on any proposed allocated sites, to ensure that full and proper account is taken of the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB. For more information and advice please contact the Chilterns Conservation Board at [lmurfett@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:lmurfett@chilternsaonb.org).
7. We wish Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council all the best for the preparation of their Neighbourhood Plan.

---

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85>



### **Conservation Boards**

A Conservation Board is a statutory independent corporate body set up by Parliamentary Order under the provisions of Section 86 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

Section 87 of the CRoW Act sets out the purposes of a conservation board as:

- a) the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty, and
- b) the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty

But if it appears to the board that there is a conflict between those purposes, they are to attach greater weight to the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a).

Furthermore "A conservation board, while having regard to the purposes mentioned in subsection (1) [of Section 87], shall seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the area of outstanding natural beauty, and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of outstanding natural beauty."

Section 85 of the CRoW Act states under "General duty of public bodies etc"

"(1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty."

The attached response has been prepared by Lucy Murfett, Planning Officer, under delegated powers and will be presented for approval to the Chilterns Conservation Board's Planning Committee at its next meeting. Any further comments made at that meeting will be duly forwarded. Should you require any further information do not hesitate to contact the writer.

### **List of Organisations providing Nominees to the Chilterns AONB Conservation Board**

- Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire County Councils;
- Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils (unitary authorities);
- Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, North Hertfordshire, South Buckinghamshire, South Oxfordshire, Three Rivers and Wycombe District Councils;
- Dacorum Borough Council;
- The Central Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire Parish Councils (6 elected in total), and
- DEFRA (8 in total).