



AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUMMARY

Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	26 May 2015
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Endorsement of Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2014-2019
Contact:	<p>Cllr Andrew Williams, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration.</p> <p>James Doe, Assistant Director, Planning, Development and Regeneration (extension 2583),</p> <p>Laura Wood, Team Leader, Strategic Planning and Regeneration (extension 2661); and</p> <p>Laura Badham, Technical Assistant, Strategic Planning and Regeneration (extension 2660)</p>
Purpose of report:	To seek endorsement of the new Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019.
Recommendations	Cabinet is recommended to endorse the AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 as a material consideration in the exercise of the Council's planning powers.
Corporate Objectives:	This report reflects the Council's objectives of a 'Clean and Safe Environment' whilst facilitating rural 'regeneration' and the delivery of 'Affordable Housing' of an appropriate scale and in appropriate locations within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in order to support rural communities and the rural economy.
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>None specifically in relation to the Management Plan although the Council does support the work of the Chilterns Conservation Board, via an annual grant.</p>
'Value For Money Implications'	By working together with other local planning authorities with land within the AONB, and with the Conservation Board itself in preparing planning guidance and advice for the AONB, the

	Council is achieving value for money.
Risk Implications	<p>Failure to endorse the AONB Management Plan would mean it has less weight in the consideration of planning applications and the use of the Chiltern Buildings Design Guide in assessing applications could be limited as a result.</p> <p>Failure to take account of the management Plan in relevant planning decisions would also mean the Council had failed to take account of a statutory planning document.</p>
Community Impact Assessment	The AONB Management Plan relates to the management of the AONB as a whole and access to it. There are no equalities implications of this report.
Health And Safety Implications	There are no direct health and safety implications related to this report or the Management Plan itself.
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<p>Monitoring Officer: No comments to add.</p> <p>S.151 Officer: No comments to add.</p>
Consultees:	Consultation on the Management Plan was undertaken direct by the Chilterns Conservation Board. Details are provided in the Adoption Statement. Copies are available in the Group Rooms, on the Conservation Board's website and on request from the Council.
Background papers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 Consultation Draft – September 2013 • Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Management Plan 2014-2019 – A Framework for Action. • Dacorum Borough Council's Core Strategy (adopted September 2013).
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework • PPG - Planning Practice Guidance • AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty • SEA – Strategic Environmental Assessment

BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Following adoption of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan on 25 March 2014 the Chilterns Conservation Board has requested that the Council endorse the document as a material consideration in the exercise of its planning powers. A copy of the Management Plan has been placed in the Members Rooms and is available on the AONB Board's

website:

http://www.chilternsaonb.org/uploads/files/ConservationBoard/ManagementPlan/Management%20Plan%202014-19/chilterns_management_plan_2014-19_final.pdf

- 1.2. This Management Plan replaces the previous version of the document that covered the period 2008-13.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Council has supported the AONB since its original designation. This document supports the Council's own objectives (set out in Policy CS24: The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty of the Core Strategy) to conserve and enhance those parts of the Chilterns AONB that fall within Dacorum's boundary.
- 2.2. During the plan preparation process the Board has undertaken a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the plan as required by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations¹. A copy of the Environmental Report is available on the Board's website².
- 2.3. During the plan preparation process the Board also undertook an Appropriate Assessment of the potential impact of the Plan on the conservation objectives of Sites of European Importance for Nature Conservation affected by the Plan, as required by the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) (Amendment)(England and Wales) Regulations 2006. Natural England has confirmed that the assessment complies with the legislative requirements. A copy of the Appropriate Assessment is also available on the Board's website.

3. KEY CHANGES

- 3.1 The latest version of the Management Plan is very similar to its predecessor in terms of both structure and content. This largely reflects the fact that the challenges and pressures facing the Chilterns AONB remain largely unchanged.
- 3.2 The document continues to be structured under a number of core themes, with associated cross-cutting themes. Each of these has contextual information and a series of broad aims, followed by some short policy statements and monitoring indicators. These monitoring indicators are reported through the State of the Environment Report, prepared annually by the Conservation Board.
- 3.3 Key differences between the previous and current versions of the Management Plan relate to:
 - References to Government guidance updated to refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
 - Inclusion of text and a policy principle opposing the development of the High Speed 2 (HS2) rail link, which would have a series impact on a large area of the Chilterns AONB;
 - Addition of two new cross-cutting themes – relating to ecosystem services and environmental sustainability;

¹ (The SEA Regulations, Statutory Instrument 2004, No.1633).

² <http://www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/management-plan.html>

- Increased emphasis on protecting and enhancing the setting of the AONB, to reflect publication of a new policy statement by the Conservation Board on this matter; and
- Inclusion of reference to ‘heritage assets’ to reflect use of this new term in the NPPF and other recent guidance.

4. GOVERNANCE GUIDANCE

- 4.1. Government guidance³ states that planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment. Local planning authorities should therefore have regard to AONB Management Plans because these documents demonstrate partnership working and delivery of designation objectives. AONB Management Plans do not form part of the statutory development plan but can help to set the strategic context for development by providing evidence and principles for development within the AONB. These principles should be taken account of in local planning authorities’ Local Plans and any Neighbourhood Plans in AONB areas. AONB Management Plans may also be material considerations in making decisions on individual planning applications.
- 4.2. The adopted Core Strategy for Dacorum includes reference to the AONB in its Enhancing the Natural Environment section. Policy CS24 specifically states that development in Dacorum will have regard to the policies and actions set out in the Chilterns Conservation Board’s Management Plan and support the principles set out within the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and associated technical notes.

5. CONCLUSION

- 4.1. The Chilterns Conservation Board have adopted the Management Plan and wish each individual district / borough Council to endorse it. This Council has already informally expressed its support for the plan, through Officers’ input into its revision. The Council also has a duty to have regard to the AONB in exercising its functions. It is therefore recommended that the Council endorse the Chilterns AONB Management Plan for 2014-2019.

³ National Planning Practice Guidance – Does planning need to take account of management plans for Areas of outstanding Natural Beauty?