

An aerial photograph of a village nestled in a lush green valley. The foreground shows a mix of traditional brick and timber-framed houses with red-tiled roofs. A church with a prominent steeple is visible on the right. The middle ground is dominated by rolling green hills and dense forests. The background shows more distant hills under a clear sky. The text 'Treasure & safeguard our landscape' is overlaid in a white, cursive font across the center of the image.

Treasure & safeguard
our landscape

10. DEVELOPMENT

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are outstanding landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them. Special planning controls apply in the AONB. The planning system protects AONBs in order to conserve and enhance their natural beauty. In this chapter, we set out policies for development in the Chilterns AONB to help look after it for current and future generations and ensure that anything that is built genuinely enhances the AONB.

In the AONB the planning priorities are conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty, and the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage (see the National Planning Policy Framework³⁵, paragraph 172). Whilst nationally there is a need for development, there is also a need to protect the most special places, the finest and most beautiful parts of the countryside. This is particularly true for the Chilterns, an irreplaceable green lung for London and the south east.

The Chilterns AONB is split across thirteen local authorities³⁶ which have the responsibility for housing allocations and development decisions through planning policy and development management functions. Local authorities have a legal duty to have regard to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB³⁷. They also have the power to take all such action as appears to them expedient to accomplish this³⁸. Conservation Boards are well placed to work with local planning authorities in an advisory role, we bring understanding of local landscape character, sensitivities and capacity for accommodating change.

We comment as consultees on all emerging plans and major planning applications and we prepare guidance for householders, architects and developers. We bring together those who make plans and determine planning applications in the Chilterns to encourage cross-boundary thinking and co-operation over the AONB.



This AONB Management Plan is not part of the statutory development plan, but it may be a material consideration in planning application decisions³⁹ and planning weight can be appropriately attached. This AONB Management Plan should be considered when developing local plans and neighbourhood plans within or affecting the Chilterns AONB. It provides evidence on the characteristics of the Chilterns and objectives for development in the Chilterns.

It is the only plan for the whole AONB. It should be read along with government policy for the AONB set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and policies in local authority development plans and communities' neighbourhood plans.

³⁵www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2 ³⁶www.gov.uk/find-local-council ³⁷ Section 85 of Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85 ³⁸ Section 84 of Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/84

³⁹ National Planning Practice Guidance section on Natural Environment www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment

Protocol for consulting the Chilterns Conservation Board

The CCB has a Planning Committee and employs a Planning Officer to provide specialist AONB planning advice on both development plans and planning applications. A protocol is in place with local planning authorities setting out when to consult the Board, including on all applications for:

- Major housing development (for example 10 dwellings or more or 0.5 hectare or more) or employment and similar development (1,000 square metres or 1 hectare or more)
- Telecommunications masts
- Extraction of brickearth and development related to the local brick making industry
- Waste activities
- Floodlighting or other intrusive lighting
- Equestrian development, particularly larger in scale and in prominent locations
- Large scale agricultural or employment development
- Single, large isolated dwellings (new or replacement)
- Land operations that involve significant cut or fill or alterations to landform
- Noisy or intrusive recreation proposals
- Gypsy and traveller accommodation
- New visitor facilities
- Airport development likely to lead to overflying of the AONB
- Renewable energy⁴⁰ developments, particularly for major energy generation

Other smaller proposals including those in prominent locations or likely to set a precedent, or involving the loss of a community facility, should also be referred to the Board for comment.



There are stretches where you don't see a building for miles, this is a rare experience in the busy south east

Key Issues

Pressure for development: The Chilterns is a highly desirable area in which to live, within easy commuting distance of London. Research shows a four-fold increase in the number of new homes granted planning permission each year in the Chilterns AONB⁴¹. Local authorities face pressures when preparing their local plans and some, with a shortage of alternatives, are proposing significant housing allocations in the AONB. Government policy confirms that the presence of AONBs can restrict development in order to help achieve sustainable development⁴² and that “the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited”⁴³.

Small-scale changes: Small piecemeal changes to land and buildings can harm the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB. Examples include pony paddocks, garden extensions, newly landscaped grounds, the spread of fencing, replacement windows, new external lighting, private leisure buildings, trampolines and children’s play equipment. Electric gates, high fencing and CCTV over public rights of way make the area feel more exclusive, and people feel excluded. They change the distinctiveness, heritage and character of the landscape, and leave less space for nature. The Board has prepared advice in the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide⁴⁴ and supplementary technical notes to help householders and landowners to make well-informed choices so that changes are appropriate to the special qualities of the

Chilterns AONB. The advice covers all aspects of building renovation, extensions, appropriate materials, outbuildings, boundary treatments etc. Our series of Chilterns Landowners’ Guides⁴⁵ include information on appropriate native species for new hedgerow and tree planting in the Chilterns, and advice for horse owners.

Permitted Development: AONBs have traditionally been excluded from permitted development, but in recent years these rights have been widened, reducing councils’ ability to control and secure appropriate forms of development. However, where permitted development rights threaten harm to the AONB, local planning authorities can invoke powers to remove them using Article 4 Directions.

Cumulative impact of development: A single planning proposal may affect only a small area of the AONB. However, a number of similar developments in the area, incremental changes over time, or a series of new developments in sequential views along an important trail, can have a significant cumulative impact. The character of the AONB, its wildlife and people’s enjoyment could slowly diminish over time. We have further advice in our Position Statement on the Cumulative Impacts of Development on the Chilterns AONB⁴⁶.

⁴¹Independent Review of Housing in England’s AONBs (2017) shows the number of homes permitted in the Chilterns AONB rose from an average of 82 per year before 2012, to over 386 per year during 2015–17 (the 386 figure is an under-count because the 2015–17 figures exclude smaller sites of less than 10 units). ⁴²National Planning Policy Framework para 11 and footnote 6 make it clear that the requirement for local plans to meet objectively assessed needs does not apply in AONBs. ⁴³National Planning Policy Framework para 172. ⁴⁴www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/planning-development/buildings-design-guidance ⁴⁵www.chilternsaonb.org/about-chilterns/farming-land-use/guidance-for-landowners ⁴⁶www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/planning-development/position-statements

Strategic Objectives

DO1 Ensure planning decisions put the conservation and enhancement of the AONB first.

DO2 Ensure that where development happens, it leaves the AONB better than it was before – richer in wildlife, quieter, darker at night, designed to have a low impact on the environment, and beautiful to look at and enjoy.

DO3 Embrace opportunities to restore natural beauty on sites currently degraded by unsympathetic development, infrastructure or dereliction.



Policies

To achieve these objectives, we must work together to:

DO1

DP1 Ensure planning decisions take full account of the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB and the great weight given to its protection in the NPPF.

The purpose of designating an area of countryside as AONB is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. That is the single and only purpose in law. An AONB must be treated differently from the wider countryside; it has the highest status of protection for its landscape and scenic beauty, equal to National Parks. Government policy is that great weight⁴⁴ should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important in AONBs. This requirement applies to all sizes of planning proposal, large and small.

The term 'natural beauty' covers a wide range of elements, including landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features, and the rich history of human settlement over the ages⁴⁵. Put together these elements make the area distinctive. How the landscape looks is therefore only part of what must be considered in order to conserve and enhance natural beauty. Planners must assess impacts on natural beauty which are both direct, like loss of habitat for construction or a proposed new building of unsympathetic design, and indirect, like a new development affecting traffic levels, air quality, chalk streams and tranquillity in the AONB.

DP2 Reject development in the AONB unless it meets the following criteria:

- a. it is a use appropriate to its location,
- b. it is appropriate to local landscape character,
- c. it supports local distinctiveness,
- d. it respects heritage and historic landscapes,
- e. it enhances natural beauty,
- f. ecological and environmental impacts are acceptable,
- g. there are no detrimental impacts on chalk streams,
- h. there is no harm to tranquillity through the generation of noise, motion and light that spoil quiet enjoyment or disturb wildlife, and
- i. there are no negative cumulative effects, including when considered with other plans and proposals.

Policy DP2 sets out what to consider in order to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the AONB. It applies to all development in the AONB, both minor and major.

DP3 Refuse planning permission for major development in the AONB unless there are exceptional circumstances and where there is a clear demonstration it is in the public interest.

Government policy requires that planning applications for major developments in AONBs should be refused “other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest”⁴⁷.

Planning law establishes quantitative size thresholds to distinguish between major and minor development, but the NPPF explicitly states that these thresholds should not be used to identify major development in National Parks and AONBs. Here a more qualitative assessment is needed⁴⁸. Whether a proposal is major development in an AONB is a matter for the decision maker, normally the local planning authority or in the case of appeals, a planning inspector. Developments below the size of the usual thresholds for major development could constitute major development in the AONB, for example a single large house in a prominent location on the Chilterns escarpment. The protocol for when to consult to Board (see box on page 72) may be a useful indication of types of development more likely to major.

In deciding whether a proposal constitutes major development in the AONB, the Board recommends that decision makers consider whether the proposal, by reason of its nature, scale and setting, has the **potential** to have a significant adverse impact on the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, and on the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB (see introduction pages 7, 10 and 11). The potential for adverse impact will include the consideration of both the impact of cumulative development and the individual characteristics of each proposal and its context.

If a proposal is major, the decision maker will need to assess against the considerations in the NPPF para 172. Major housing schemes are unlikely to be acceptable because the need could be met outside the Chilterns AONB, elsewhere in the housing market area. Similarly for large economic development, energy and other major proposals. If it is considered that exceptional circumstances exist and development would be in the public interest, all opportunities to conserve and enhance the special qualities should be sought, by following policies DP1 to DP15.

⁴⁷National Planning Policy Framework para 172. Deciding whether a proposal is ‘major development’ is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. ⁴⁸See box in this Plan’s Introduction ‘What is natural beauty?’

DP4 In the setting of the AONB, take full account of whether proposals harm the AONB. For example, development of land visible in panoramic views from the Chilterns escarpment, or which generates traffic in or travelling across the AONB, or which increases water abstraction from the chalk aquifer, thereby reducing flow in chalk streams.

A development outside the AONB boundary can cause harm to the AONB, even if it is some distance away. The local authority's legal duty towards the AONB⁴⁹ applies when a proposal affects land in the AONB, regardless of where that effect originates (inside or outside the AONB). We have produced special advice in a Position Statement on Development Affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB⁵⁰. The setting of the AONB is not a geographic zone that can be mapped, nor does it cover a set distance from the AONB boundary. Tall structures like chimneys that break the skyline or large growth proposals even far away can have an impact on the AONB, and so fall within the setting. Adverse impacts are not only visual, a noisy development may impact adversely on the tranquillity of the AONB even if not visible from the AONB. We consider that the setting of the Chilterns AONB is the area within which development and land management proposals (by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design) may have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the area.

Outside the AONB, the Chilterns is surrounded by large settlements, many of which are planned to expand. For example, Aylesbury has been designated a Garden Town and will grow by at least another 13,500 homes. Growth is also being planned for Luton, Princes Risborough, High Wycombe, Hemel Hempstead and Chinnor, to name just a few. Some of these expansion plans include land within the AONB and many include land in its setting. The vast scale of the nearby Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor will change the strategic geography of the region, making it even more important that the Chilterns is protected to play its role in the health and wellbeing of that future population.

⁴⁹in Section 85 of the CRoW Act. ⁵⁰www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/planning-development/position-statements



BEFORE DEVELOPMENT IN THE SETTING OF THE AONB

This green field at Alscot outside the AONB, and the view to the hill and panoramic views from the top of Whiteleaf Hill, will be lost to development under plans for a 2,500 home urban extension of Princes Risborough.



AFTER DEVELOPMENT IN THE SETTING OF THE AONB

This "after" example from Chinnor (Former Garden Centre Site) shows how development can harm the view to the AONB. The edge of Chinnor is now very visible from the Thame Road, Emmington Road and the public footpaths in between. The density and the alignment with the houses tightly packed in a row, and lack of screening planting contribute to the negative effect on views towards the escarpment.

The Chilterns chalk aquifer serves as the major source for drinking water for the AONB and wider sub-region. Over-abstracting this resource has contributed to chronic low flows in Chilterns chalk streams⁵¹. Drying up is shortening their functioning length, for example one Chilterns chalk stream, the River Ver, no longer flows at all in the AONB. Current levels of abstraction are unsustainable and need to be reduced to restore chalk stream ecology, chalk stream natural function, and the value of chalk streams to landscape character. Development in the setting of the AONB and the future growth arc will require construction of new strategic water resources (e.g. reservoirs, water transfers and desalination plants) elsewhere in the south east of England, to avoid further serious harm to chalk streams and to help restore flows.

DP5 Require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that meets the standards in the GLVIA⁵² latest edition for developments in the AONB or affecting its setting.

All but the smallest projects should be accompanied by a LVIA to ensure that impacts are assessed and understood. This must address effects on both the protected landscape as a resource in its own right (whether visible or not), and effects on views and visual amenity (as experienced by people). The LVIA should be prepared early enough to inform the evolution of a project, so that it is landscape-led, demonstrably contributes to conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB, and fully respects and integrates the special qualities of the AONB into the planning, design, construction and management of the development, from the very beginning of the project's inception. Visualisations and photomontages can help developers, decision makers and communities understand the effects of proposals. LVIA's should include night time effects as well as day time, to identify any risk of light pollution.

DP6 Support sustainable farming and forestry, nature conservation and facilities for visitors appropriate to the special qualities of the AONB.

Planning policies and decisions should encourage the Chilterns' role as a haven for wildlife, a place to experience history and enjoy the outdoors. Types of developments most likely to benefit from the AONB, and in return bring benefits to the AONB, are those that are most compatible with conserving and enhancing its character and supporting public appreciation. These include sustainable farming and forestry, tourism businesses (e.g. accommodation, food and drink, visitor attractions, health and adventure challenges), tourism-related businesses (e.g. retail, arts and crafts, diversified farm businesses), industry reliant on resources unique to the Chilterns (e.g. Chilterns brickworks), countryside trades and rural skills (e.g. woodcrafts, flint working), businesses which directly benefit the environment (e.g. nature conservation and vernacular building repair) or that showcase its beauty and history (e.g. the Chilterns as a film location).

Conversely, developments most likely to be disadvantaged from an AONB location include those with no particular reason to be in the area, especially those offering little or no benefit to conserving and enhancing the character of the AONB. These tend to detract from public appreciation and blur the distinction between the AONB and outside. These include large new greenfield housing estates, large industrial activities, distribution and haulage, waste processing, and businesses with extensive built footprints that develop and grow rapidly.

⁵¹See also Nature (Policy NP4) and Land, Woodland & Water (LP13, LP21, Key Action 5) ⁵²Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, produced by the Landscape Institute

DO2

DP7 Only support development that is of the highest standards of design that respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, the traditional character of Chilterns vernacular buildings, and reinforces a sense of place and local distinctiveness. Require a Design and Access Statement to accompany every application, explaining how it complies with the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/planning-development/buildings-design-guidance

The Chilterns has a distinctive vernacular architecture based on the consistent use of local materials: Chilterns brick, clay roof tiles and flint. Attractive villages like Ewelme, Turville, Hambleden and Aldbury are among our most popular visitor destinations. New development of all types needs to respect vernacular architecture, settlement character and the local landscape. This will require developers to do more than use standard designs.

New design must also exhibit the highest environmental standards in terms of energy and water conservation whilst complementing the character the AONB. Local natural resources should be used in new construction (local timber, locally made bricks and tiles, clunch and flint) to continue the vernacular materials tradition and support the last remaining local producers, recognising their vital importance for historic buildings repair.

The Board has published the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide which has been adopted as supplementary planning document by most of our local planning authorities. It covers topics such as the setting of buildings, the design of vernacular features and the use of traditional local materials.

Conserving and enhancing natural beauty does not simply mean screening development behind vegetation or using designs which clad a standard house type with local materials.



Classic Chilterns vernacular architecture at Turville: small-scale cottages of local brick and flint with clay tile roofs



The Chilterns Conservation Board runs the Chilterns Building Design Awards with the Chiltern Society to encourage and recognise good design. This new build Winery at Hundred Hills Vineyard, South Oxfordshire won the latest awards



'Anywhere' designs fail to keep the Chilterns special and distinctive



Grand new build projects can also be insensitive to the AONB. Stark, white, huge and angular this replacement dwelling, here viewed from the Chilterns cycleway, dominates the landscape in its siting and design.

DP8 Keep skies dark at night by only using light where and when needed. All new lighting should be the minimum required and meet or exceed guidance⁵³ for intrinsically dark zones. Avoid architectural designs that spill light out of large areas of glazing.

The Chilterns AONB has relatively dark skies for the south east, making it a place people can still experience the wonder of starry skies and good for wildlife. AONBs are intrinsically dark environments (Zone E1 in the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance) and planning conditions should be applied to restrict and control lighting. Light pollution of all types should be first prevented, by avoiding light where it is not needed, and where it is, by designing lighting to mitigate harm, through shading, height of fixings, beam orientation, LUX, colour temperature and the proposed hours of use. For example, downward pointing, shielded, operated on timer, and with a 'warm white' colour temperature of 2700-Kelvin maximum.

Traditional Chilterns vernacular buildings have small windows. Moderns designs with large areas of glazing should be avoided so that buildings do not appear as boxes of light in the countryside at night, and glinting glazing in the daytime.



**KEEP DARK SKIES AND STARS BRIGHT:
LIGHT POLLUTION SPILLING FROM MODERN BUILDING**

DP9 Ensure that the design and implementation of High Speed 2 complies with the HS2 Detailed Design Principles⁵⁴ prepared by the AONB Review Group.

This document sets out design principles that could reasonably be applied to HS2 works in the Chilterns AONB and its setting, and which aim to achieve an exemplar landscape design for the project.

DP10 Make sure that all development that is permitted in the AONB or affecting its setting delivers a net gain for the Chilterns by

- a. on-site improvements for biodiversity, landscape, the rights of way network, AONB visitor facilities, and/or
- b. financial contributions, secured through s106⁵⁵, CIL⁵⁶, or offsetting schemes, towards wider green infrastructure projects that enhance the AONB by meeting the aims of this AONB Management Plan.

The introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and use of biodiversity accounting provide a way for developments to fund green infrastructure and biodiversity projects. Using these mechanisms, individual developments can contribute to conservation and restoration projects, and help offset the incremental increases each bring like traffic, recreation pressure, path erosion, and habitat reduction and severance. Avoiding harm, reducing harm and compensating for it is likely to play an increasing role. Delivering on-site

enhancements should come first before off-site contributions are considered. The government is moving to an environmental net gain principle for development, with mandatory biodiversity net gain in the short term, and longer-term plans for environmental net gain. The CCB recommends environmental net gain in nationally protected landscapes should include funding projects that connect people to the natural environment, maintain and expand the rights of way network, and restore and enhance natural beauty of the AONB.

All development in and affecting the AONB should contribute through on-site conservation and enhancement of the AONB, and/or (depending on its scale and impacts) contribute financially to projects which assist with delivering AONB Management Plan aims. For example, large-scale housing and growth proposed near the AONB will mean extra near neighbours of the Chilterns. This investment could repair and connect habitats, strengthen the AONB's capacity for accommodating additional visitors without damage, create new walking and cycling green infrastructure links into the AONB, and provide suitable alternatives to visiting the Special Areas of Conservation.

We will work with partners to develop a menu of green infrastructure AONB projects to be funded by development (see section 11, Implementation).

⁵³Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance GN01: 2011 Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light ⁵⁴www.chilternsaonb.org/latestNews/hs2/HS2-Review-Group ⁵⁵Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken (under section 106 of the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act). ⁵⁶The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support development.



DP11 Where a local community need is shown, support the development of well-designed, small-scale homes within villages which are affordable⁵⁷ for people who work within or have long-standing family connections to the Chilterns AONB.

The Chilterns is becoming increasingly expensive as a place to live. Research by Savills using Land Registry data shows that house prices in the Chilterns AONB attracted a premium of 75% above the average house price for the counties, and 162% above the UK average:

Area	Distinction	Average Second-hand Sale Price, 12 months to April 2018	5 Year Growth	Premium above County(s) average	Premium above UK average
Chilterns	AONB	£718,629	29%	75%	162%

Source: Savills Research using Land Registry

Although many homes have been permitted in the AONB in recent years, very little of it has been affordable housing. Regrettably, there have been no Rural Exceptions Schemes⁵⁸ in the Chilterns for several years and the stock of affordable homes has dwindled through the right to buy and loss of tied accommodation that goes with a job. Outdoor work in farming, forestry, conservation land management, tourism and public services is typically low paid, making it hard for people with the skills the AONB needs to stay, and the area's cultural heritage is lost when families with long local connections move away. Rural pubs, village shops and barns are being lost to residential conversion, while smaller homes and bungalows seem attractive propositions for redevelopment into luxury large replacement dwellings.

We need new approaches to make sure the right kind of housing is being built. This does not mean proposing any extra housing development in the Chilterns, already 300–400 homes a year are approved in this AONB, the challenge is changing who they are for, so that homes are available and affordable for local people. Sensitively-designed conversions, infill, rural exceptions sites and community-led housing schemes in the villages of the AONB can benefit the AONB. They are best when of a small-scale and meeting local needs.

DP12 Support sympathetic proposals that enhance the Chilterns as a place to visit, live, explore and enjoy. Protect existing visitor and community facilities, such as rural pubs, public transport, B&Bs, youth hostels, village shops and cafes. Support sensitively designed new visitor facilities.

Small-scale, carefully-sited and well-designed proposals that provide or enhance community facilities are likely to be welcome. Proposals that involve active travel into and across the Chilterns by walking, cycling, horse riding, bus and train, rather than private car are the most compatible with AONB designation purposes.

Existing facilities, such as rural pubs, shops, public transport and community buildings, should be protected from loss or change of use. They are important assets and once lost are hard to replace.

DO3

DP13 Support opportunities for enhancing the AONB by removing derelict or detracting developments and infrastructure.

There are some places in the AONB where buildings and structures like pylons, rail gantries, telecoms masts, television masts, waste sites, minerals sites, and farm infrastructure have scarred the beauty of the Chilterns. The removal of unsightly structures can help restore beauty and rural character. Infrastructure providers should remove all redundant masts and equipment. We welcome continued investment in undergrounding overhead electricity lines in the AONB and recommend that all new supplies should be undergrounded unless there are ecological or archaeological constraints to this.

⁵⁷Affordable housing is housing for eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. ⁵⁸Rural Exceptions Schemes are small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be allowed for housing. They seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection.

DP14 Avoid new or upgraded infrastructure (roads, railways, airports, pylons, masts etc.) which harm the AONB landscape, nature, air quality, tranquillity or the visitor experience. Fully assess impacts on the AONB, including increased recreation pressure, traffic, overflying and severance of ecological connectivity in the AONB. Avoid, mitigate and compensate to achieve a net gain for the AONB.

In recent years, growing traffic volumes, speeding and rat running through the AONB have brought more noise, motion, air pollution into the AONB. Wildlife-rich verges and ancient sunken lanes are being eroded and damaged by vehicles passing one another. Our most highly protected natural habitats in the Chilterns, the three Special Areas of Conservation, are all sensitive to air pollution and are all exceeding critical loads, which may lead to a loss of rare species. There are also safety risks for those wanting to enjoy the Chilterns on foot, bicycle and horseback.

Unsympathetic, over-engineered road schemes and excessive street lighting can further harm the AONB. We have produced design advice on sympathetic management of Chilterns Highways in guidance produced with the County Councils⁵⁹.



Railways offer sustainable travel options to the Chilterns but also involve noise and, in the case of rail electrification, visual intrusion to beautiful landscapes. A whole new railway, HS2, will be constructed through the Chilterns AONB at its widest point, bringing severance and major permanent impacts on the landscape. On its own, this is enough change for the Chilterns to accommodate for a century. However, other pressures continue, like airport expansion at Heathrow and Luton which could result in more aircraft over-flying the AONB and harm its tranquillity. The effects on the Chilterns AONB must be assessed in full and cumulatively with other projects early in the decision-making process.

Harm to nationally designated landscapes is not something that can be offset, it is not possible to create a landscape of this unique natural beauty elsewhere as a substitute. The mitigation hierarchy in environmental policy and best practice prioritises 1) the avoidance of harm; before 2) identifying all possible mitigation; and only then deals with 3) compensatory measures in relation to residual impacts. Compensation is a last resort. Large national projects like HS2 are triggering a requirement for major investment in landscape to compensate (in some way) for harm.

DP15 Seek opportunities to remove or replace existing inappropriate external lighting to restore dark skies at night.

Householders, farms, community facilities, recreational facilities and businesses in the AONB can take simple steps to reduce light pollution by:

- Angling existing lights downwards
- Fitting timers
- Replacing existing lighting with designs appropriate for intrinsically dark zones

KEY ACTIONS

1. Work together to ensure all development plans covering the Chilterns conserve and enhance the AONB, for example by incorporating the Chilterns AONB model policy⁶⁰ and exploring the scope for joint development plan documents for the AONB.
2. Apply the CRoW Act 2000 Section 85 duty⁶¹ and refer to it when making decisions on planning proposals in or affecting the Chilterns AONB
3. Apply the advice in the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide to ensure high quality sympathetic development.
4. Encourage innovative mechanisms for rural affordable housing compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.
5. Work together to develop AONB enhancement projects that can be funded by development through s106 contributions, CIL and funding packages to compensate for the impacts of urban growth or infrastructure projects.

⁶⁰Model Policy for the Chilterns AONB www.chilternsaonb.org/conservation-board/planning-development/planning-training

⁶¹www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85