



Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF
THE CHILTERNNS CONSERVATION BOARD held on Thursday 23rd October 2025 at
the offices of the Chilterns Conservation Board, The Lodge, 90 Station Road,
Chinnor OX39 4HA commencing at 10.00 AM**

Committee Members Present:

Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member (chair)	Parish Councils
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member (deputy chair)	Local Authorities
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member	Parish Councils
Cllr James Norman	Board Member	Local Authorities
Chris Hannington	Co-opted Member	
Paul Hayes*	Co-opted Member	

Also in attendance:

Matt Thomson	Head of Strategy & Planning; Deputy Monitoring Officer	Officer
Elaine King	CEO	Officer
Mike Stubbs	Planning Adviser (Dev't Mgt)	Officer
Victoria Thomson	Planning Adviser (Policy)	Officer
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board and Minute taker	Officer
Cllr Phillip Spicer*	Board Member	Local Authorities

*listened online

No public present.

The Chair welcomed all present and introductions were made. The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson noted that the meeting was inquorate due to lack of Secretary of State appointees in the room. The meeting was duly adjourned and key decisions deferred to the next meeting. Those present agreed to continue discussions on the agenda items as an update for members and an informal steer for officers.

25/26.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies received and accepted from Committee members:
Simon Mortimer – Secretary of State member

25/26.2

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

25/26.3 Notice of Urgent Business

None.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Thomson'.

25/26.4 Approval of Notes of the previous meeting held on 17th April 2025

The notes from the meeting were taken as a true record but could not be signed by the Chair due to not being quorate.

25/26.5 Matters Arising

The Chair asked if there was any update following the New Forest National Park judgment in December 2024. The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson advised that he would circulate details of the repercussions following the verdict, along with other matters relating to the strengthened s85 duty following a further case with the same Judge presiding.

A submission was made by Officers regarding the Grand Union Canal project; any further updates will be shared when available.

Action: MT to circulate responses to the New Forest and any subsequent High Court judgements

25/26.6 Considerations of Motions Submitted by Members

No motions received.

25/26.7 Public Question Time

None in attendance.

25/26.8 Planning Committee work programme (summary paper)

The membership of the Planning Committee was confirmed at the September Board meeting as:

Local Authority Representatives

Cllr Louise Price (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Robert Carington

Cllr James Norman

One vacancy

Secretary of State Representatives

Simon Mortimer

Two vacancies

Parish Council Representatives

Cllr Charles Hussey

Cllr Sue Rowland (Chair)

Co-Opted Members

Chris Hannington

Paul Hayes

A discussion around how to proceed with the Planning Committee, in lieu of the vacancies and the historical issues with recruitment was had particularly surrounding the problems with quoracy due to the legislation the Committee is subject to. It was felt that continuing as a panel, rather than a committee may be the best way forward and a paper outlining further details will be submitted to the Board for its consideration. It was noted that more robust and frequent communications from Officers would be needed if

the committee were disbanded in favour of a panel, or a different option, which should provide the support for officers, oversight of their work, and enable the development of strategic policy. MT said how valuable the discussions at the Planning Committee meetings are for Officers.

Action: MT and EK to bring paper with proposals including an assessment of resources available going forward

It was suggested that volunteers, such as retired planners or landscape architects, could be utilised to assist with increasing coverage of responses to consultations to enable officers to focus on more strategic matters and engagement with LPAs. However volunteer management brings its own challenges and would require a lot of Officer input and time; working with volunteers could be seen as a 'stretch goal' once existing practices were settled. Both Parish Councils and the Chiltern Society were raised as potential sources of assistance, and the Chair volunteered to attend Chiltern Society Planning meetings alongside officers. CCB officers were encouraged to develop more DM and Policy guidance to support Parish Councils, Chiltern Society and others to support Chilterns National Landscape objectives.

Additional capacity for the team has been added with Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser (Policy) following a two year recruitment search. She will focus on local plan and other policy responses, and also help to improve back office ways of working. The updated Management Plan Review was approved by the Board in June; the design is currently being finalised and will be circulated to members when complete.

1. The Committee NOTED these updates
2. The CEO and Head of Strategy and Planning will provide a paper for next steps on the Planning Committee

25/26.9 Development Management Casework Update Q1 and Q2 2025/26

Mike Stubbs, Planning Adviser (DM), had provided a detailed paper on live cases with updates since the last Planning Committee meeting.

The Committee provided feedback on the following key applications:

- DBC 24/02705/MOA Land at Bulbourne Wood Residential Care Home within AONB and wooded glade – the applicant is likely to appeal the refusal of permission by the Local Authority. The committee noted that the refusal had not, as yet, been appealed but the applicant has until Jan 2026.
- BC-C&SB PL/25/2447/FA Mop End Farm battery storage facility near Amersham sub-station. The applicant is a private entity rather than government led, and the application has specified that they would donate funds to the Chilterns National Landscape for mitigation works (similar to Mend the Gap). The Committee noted that 'grey belt' arguments were being used here, and asked for a briefing on this new policy area; they requested that officers seek legal advice on the funding issue, and discuss with the CEO, and colleagues at the National Landscapes Association.
- SODC P25/S1987/FUL Lewknor and Postcombe Solar array/farm proposal– the location here is such that it would strongly affect the special qualities of the National Landscape due to visibility.



- BC-C&SB PL/25/2402/OA Land SE of Whielden Street Old Amersham – the site is within the NL and adjoins the conservation area. The application downplays the NL and its assessment and the site was previously opposed by the CCB when a draft allocation in the withdrawn C&SB Local Plan (in 2018).

1. **The Committee NOTED the updates in the paper but were unable to ENDORSE and this was DEFERRED to the January 2026 meeting due to not being quorate**

25/26.10 Development Management Casework – special reports

Mike Stubbs, Planning Adviser (DM), gave a presentation giving visual details of specific development proposals.

10.1 Watlington Bypass

This location is a valued landscape in relation to the Chilterns National Landscape. There has been a significantly improved design following discussions, including increased landscaping and tree planting, along with a reduction in LED illuminations. The committee noted the summary of the principal issues raised by BECL (Beechwood Estates Company Limited) and the availability of their complete report as submitted to Oxfordshire CC by their solicitor.

10.2 Ashridge (NT Estate) Gateways – Hill Farm (Dacorum BC)

Members of the Planning Committee have previously completed a site visit to this location, Hill Farm. An addition such as this would not normally be encouraged in the National Landscape, however the wider benefit to the ecology of the landscape and the relief to the "honeypot" site of the Ashridge Estate, especially the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation, need to be balanced with the potential harm. A discussion ensued regarding the colour of the building and the use of Portland Stone on the exterior. Less impactful materials including wood cladding or green walls may be more appropriate, and the desire for local materials to be utilised first wherever possible (noting that Totternhoe Stone continues to be available from quarries in Bedfordshire). Clarification regarding and lighting, signage and possible noise pollution was requested. Members recommended comparison of the car parking designs with those in place at the Cheese Shed at Nettlebed Creamery, and recommended a site visit for the NT. The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) has engaged with the Ashridge Gateways project since 2023, when the National Trust (NT) commenced its public engagement programme. In September 2024, the CCB's Planning Committee, hosted by the National Trust, visited the site locations and was briefed on the problems caused by over-recreation within the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. The current principles behind the Hill Farm Gateway, within Dacorum BC, were presented to the CCB's PC on 23rd October 2025 and the PC supports the evolving but evident principles of (i) Siting the car park and visitor's centre towards the eastern boundary, away from the dry valley landscape of this proposed SANG, (ii) Concealing the car parking by virtue of its relatively sheltered location and topography and through additional landscaping/planting/mitigation, and (iii) the deployment of design thinking that involves the use of sustainable and re-purposed materials. The PC endorsed the opinion that a building in the landscape is acceptable but should not be so prominent as to impact the

wider landscape character of the site, which includes a dry valley landscape. There was a discussion of the appropriate colour palette, noting that the Chilterns does not have a colour guide (which for examples the N Wessex Downs and Mendip Hill AONB's do have) and there was discussion that the external facing would need to be reasonably muted. Portland Stone was discussed and considered very impactful. Tottenhoe stone may still be a viable option. (v) Further, that an 'access for all' strategy would be required in any planning application (CCB is able to offer further guidance) and that, acknowledging the design is at an early stage, further detailing should also deal with lighting, a signage strategy, roof voids (bat ecology) and downpipes (i.e. to blend them in). (vi) The committee also commented on the car park design now implemented at the Nettlebed Creamery, which is part-funded by the CCB's *FiPL* programme (Farming in Protected Landscapes). The appointed landscape team may want to visit this location.

(iv) That the location of this infrastructure within the design of a wider SANG is consistent with the draft pre-submission Dacorum Local Plan to 2041 policies NE5 on SANGs, NE 6 Gateway Principles and Natural England's Guidelines for Creation of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), issued August 2021 and the Development policies in the AONB Management Plan 2025 schedule of amendments.

10.3 Outcomes of Key Appeals

APP/Q3115/W/24/3356473 Satwell House, Satwell near Henley on Thames

The application was for removal of an ancient hedgerow to install gates and was dismissed on appeal as an "incongruous urbanising feature at odds with the existing character and appearance of the area."

APP/A1910/W/24/33454350 Land west of Leighton Buzzard Road Hemel Hempstead A proposal for 390 dwellings and a 70 bed care home was granted on appeal, the Inspector concluded that the proposal would cause minor adverse harm to the landscape character and appearance of the area, however this would not transpose as harm to the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Chilterns National Landscape.

APP/K0425/W/24/3356181 Huttons Farm Estate, Main Road, Hambleden

An appeal for non-determination of the planning application for construction of a shooting lodge was dismissed by the Inspector who found that the landscape would be harmed should the development be permitted.

APP/X1925/W/24/3348028 Pirton Water Tower

An application to convert a lone water tower in the National Landscape was rejected, and the Inspector specifically gave weight to the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan.

P25/S1825/PiP Wyfold Lane

The application was refused for reasons including harmful to the National Landscape.

PL/25/1753/OA Hampden Farm Barn

This application was refused for reasons including harm to the National Landscape.



1. The Committee NOTED the updates in the paper**25/26.11 Planning Policy Casework update****11.1 2025/26 narrative update including Dacorum Local Plan; South and Vale**

The Dacorum Local Plan is currently in the middle of the examination period. Officers have submitted significant objections relating to the s85 duty, as it is unclear in the plan how it will address matters regarding the National Landscape, which is not even shown on the proposal maps.

A response has been submitted regarding the Sarratt Local Plan, asking for a few minor amendments.

South Oxon and Vale's joint local plan has been held up due to the examining Inspectors concluding that the duty to cooperate had not been complied with; SODC are asking them to reconsider following a ministerial statement.

11.2 Bucks Local Plan (live consultation)

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson advised that Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser (Policy) is carrying out an analysis of the Plan, and will be using it as a basis to create a "checklist" for future local plans for Officers to use going forward (as well as to inform the Board's consultation response). The Plan appears to be positive about the National Landscape, but it is important to make sure that the development management policies carry this through.

It was noted that Local Authorities do not always liaise with the Chilterns National Landscape prior to the development of draft Plans, and that this will be part of trying to improve relations with Local Authorities.

11.3 Future directions for policy casework

The Head of Strategy and Planning, Matt Thomson reported that he expected legal challenges following the Luton Airport expansion decision; the Planning and Infrastructure Bill legislation will pose certain difficulties for National Landscapes; further work is needed to understand the new rules around grey belt land; a paper will be presented to the Board in December regarding the devolution programme for English Local Authorities. The model development plan policy will hopefully be picked up soon now there is extra capacity within the Planning team. The Committee was in support of updating the Chilterns National Landscape guidance for solar power.

25/26.12 Urgent Business

None.

25/26.13 Date of Next Meeting

- Thursday 22nd January 2026 at 10am, Chilterns National Landscape Office, Chinnor

The meeting was closed at 12.47.

The Chair.....



Date.....22/01/26