



Chilterns National Landscape

Planning Committee

10am, Thursday 30 April 2026

At the offices of the Chilterns Conservation Board, The Lodge, 90 Station Road, Chinnor, OX39 4HA commencing at 10am in the meeting room.

Members of the Planning Committee of the Chilterns Conservation Board are hereby summoned to attend meeting at the above date, time and venue. Access to the meeting from 9.45am. This meeting is being held in hybrid format as a trial (see item 8), and while we encourage members to attend in person, we would prefer online attendance to non-attendance. Voting (if applicable) is still not permitted for remote attendees.

Agenda

1. Introductions & Apologies
2. Declarations of interest
3. Notice of urgent business
4. Approval of minutes of 22 January 2026 meeting
5. Matters arising
6. Consideration of motions submitted by members
7. Public questions
8. Planning Committee work programme
9. Future of Planning Committee
10. Development Management Casework update Q4 2025/26
 - 10.1. Marshcroft/East of Tring (verbal update)
11. Planning Policy Casework update Q4 2025/26
12. Urgent Business
13. Dates of next and future meetings:
 - Thu 29 October 2026

Dr E. King, CEO

Chilterns Conservation Board

Planning Committee meeting 22nd January 2026

Chilterns National Landscape

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF
THE CHILTERNES CONSERVATION BOARD held on Thursday 22nd January 2026 at the
offices of the Chilterns Conservation Board, The Lodge, 90 Station Road, Chinnor OX39
4HA commencing at 10.15 AM**

Present:

Cllr Sue Rowland	Board Member	Parish Councils
Cllr Louise Price	Board Member	Local Authorities
Cllr Charles Hussey	Board Member	Parish Councils
Chris Hannington	Co-opted Member	
Paul Hayes*	Co-opted Member	
Simon Mortimer	Board Member	Secretary of State
Cllr James Norman	Board Member	Local Authorities

In attendance:

Matt Thomson*	Head of Strategy & Planning; Deputy Monitoring Officer	Officer
Mike Stubbs	Planning Adviser (Dev Mgt)	Officer
Victoria Thomson*	Planning Adviser (Policy)	Officer
Lorna Coldwell	Clerk to the Board and Minute taker	Officer

*listened online

No public present.

The Chair welcomed all present including those online.

25/26.14 Apologies for absence

Apologies received and accepted from Committee members:

Matthew Stanton – Secretary of State member

Apologies received and accepted from Officers:

Elaine King – Chief Executive Officer

25/26.15**Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

25/26.16 Notice of Urgent Business

None.

25/26.17 Approval of Notes of the previous meetings

The minutes and notes from the meetings of 23rd January 2025, 17th April 2025, and 23rd October 2025 were approved and signed by the Chair. It was noted that the meeting of 23rd

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January, Chris Hannington and Paul Hayes did not receive an invitation and were therefore absent by default.

25/26.18 Matters Arising

The Chair requested and was provided with updates on the following matters:

Luton Airport

The Secretary of State approved the application. Discussion focused on interpretation of the strengthened s85 duty and mitigation funding. A contribution of £250k was secured, deferred until a trigger point in the 2030s, with no associated administration funding. Judicial Review proceedings brought by LADACAN (Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) were dismissed on all five grounds.

Action – MT to circulate Judicial Review summary to Planning Committee members

Watlington Relief Road

No decision has yet been made. Officers continue to monitor progress.

Pitstone Quarry

No update.

Potten End SANG

This was refused by Dacorum Borough Council but allowed on appeal (covered later in the agenda).

Grand Union Canal Transfer

Consultations are being monitored, with a further round expected.

Strategic Planning Capacity

It has been recognised that responsibility for CNL strategy, especially the Management Plan, would be shared across the Senior Leadership Team going forward, rather than the sole responsibility of the Head of Strategy and Planning.

25/26.19 Considerations of Motions Submitted by Members

No motions received.

It was noted that the agenda contained an incorrect date which had not been updated from the previous meeting. The Head of Strategy and Planning apologised for this oversight.

25/26.20 Public Question Time

None in attendance.

25/26.21 Planning Committee work programme – Future of Planning Committee

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning had provided a report outlining ongoing and future work on planning guidance, funding opportunities and lessons learned from previous guidance projects.

The membership of the Planning Committee is confirmed as:

Local Authority members	Cllr Robert Carrington (Buckinghamshire) Cllr James Norman (South Oxon) Cllr Louise Price (Three Rivers) – Deputy Chair Cllr Philip Spice (Central Beds) (recognising likely online attendance)
Secretary of State members	Simon Mortimer

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	Matthew Stanton <i>One vacancy</i>
Parish Council members	Cllr Charles Hussey (Bucks Parish Councils) Cllr Sue Rowland (Oxon Parish Councils) – Chair

If members need to contact the Planning team, it is best to do so via the generic planning@chilterns.org.uk email as all 3 Planning Officers monitor this email and the work can be allocated appropriately.

The production of new and reviewing of existing planning guidance was discussed, which is an ongoing process as part of the planning work programme. Due to the upcoming significant reforms in planning guidance and age, some of the existing documents are out of date. The recent Chilterns Chalk Stream guidance was produced with external funding that was identified by other members of the Chilterns National Landscape team and was agreed by all as efficient and effective way to produce new guidance. Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning, is keen to work with the extended team in the future to identify any other potential funding for other guidance. It was noted that any guidance specific to the Chilterns would be better completed “in house”, including with the support of consultants, but more general policies could be left to the National Landscape Association or produced in partnership with them or other National Landscapes. Whilst all agreed that further guidance on the strengthened s85 duty of the CROW Act would be useful, the ongoing interpretations depending on various rulings mean that the Government and/or Defra are better suited to provide. In the meantime, the Committee requested a short interim statement on interpretation of the s85 duty in relation to planning. The Planning Committee advised Officers that the most important new guidance is for colour and colour palettes in new buildings, as part of the suite of design guidance. Issues relating to colour have arisen frequently in the last 12 months. This would need expert external assistance to devise. Whilst any guidance provided by the Chilterns National Landscape is only guidance, many Local Authorities are receptive to it and will use in determining applications. In addition to this and the s85 duty briefing, the Committee noted a continued need for some guidance on SANGs (not as a high priority), and agreed to retain the existing Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and technical notes for the time being pending the ongoing planning reforms.

Future of Planning Committee

A lengthy discussion was held with a number of differing views expressed, following the various options as set out in the agenda papers. There are several suggestions for moving forward, and feedback at the December Board meeting indicated significant support for retaining the committee, although the Board resolved that officers should explore options. A committee entails various administrative burdens, such as Officer time, and the need for various members in person attendance to be quorate. This is set out in legislation. An advisory group would require less administrative need and be able to meet online. The dissolution of the Planning Committee is not a decision that can be undertaken lightly, but any solution needs to recognise the best way to carry out work. A proposal to retain the Planning Committee but meet more often as an advisory group was tabled. This would enable members to be more responsive when needed but retain the committee which could be called upon if the need arose. Local Authority Planning Officers are usually unaware of whether an Officer or the committee has submitted comments unless it is raised during a hearing. The key item is to ensure that whatever is put in place best serves the needs of the Board best in terms of planning, which is and will continue to be an important matter. It was requested that the proposal be shared with the Planning Committee members prior to being put forward at the Board meeting.

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It was agreed by all that better communications are needed between Officers and members regardless and the proposed regular planning update to Planning Committee members and likely the wider Board members was be welcomed in the proposed format.

Action: Planning Team to provide a short interim briefing on interpretation of the s85 duty in planning.

Action: MT has steering for way forward in relation to new planning guidance – colour and colour palettes used for planning applications within the National Landscape

Action: MT to carry out regular (monthly) planning updates to be distributed

1. **The Committee NOTED these updates and OFFERED FEEDBACK as noted above regarding the future of the Planning Committee**
2. **The Committee OFFERED GUIDANCE on priorities for the review and preparation of planning guidance, as noted above**
3. **The Head of Strategy and Planning will provide a paper for the next steps on the Planning Committee to be discussed at a future Board meeting**

25/26.22 Development Management Casework Update Q3 2025/26

Mike Stubbs, Planning Advisor (DM) had provided a detailed paper on live cases with updates since the last Planning Committee meeting. The Committee was provided with feedback on the following cases:

- BC 23/02077/APP and PINS APP/J0405/W/25/3372885 Land to the south of Bishopstone, Dinton Bucks (Kimbewick Solar) – the application was granted by the Planning Inspector following appeal.
- TRDC 23/2073/OUT Land to north of Little Green Lane – will be heard by the Planning Committee at Three Rivers District Council
- BC PL/25/3225/OA OS Parcel 7124 Bledlow Road Saunderton – the impact on the Chilterns National Landscape is a material consideration,
- BC PL/25/2744/OA Land at Cutlers Farm Marlow Road Lane End – observations were made on the merit of a major development in the Chilterns National Landscape
- BC-C&SB PL/25/2447/FA Mop End Farm battery storage facility near Amersham substation – a new objection submitted that supersedes the previous objection in September.
- BC PL/25/4490/FA Manor Farm Ibstone – an objection was submitted in relation to the extraction of water to the aquifer due to the sensitivity of the nearby chalk stream.
- PINS APP/X0415/C/24/3356478 Land at West of Field Cottage Chartridge – an enforcement notice appeal to remove surfacing/hardstanding outside the permitted area; decision issued on 12th January to uphold the notices and dismiss the appeal.

22.1 Special Report Marlow Film Studios decision

The appeal was allowed by the Secretary of State in November 2025. The Planning Inspector did not believe that the s85 duty of the CROW Act had been fulfilled; the Secretary of State determined that in following Defra guidance the mitigation factors such as the colour palette, planting and enhancement of previously developed land was sufficient to meet the duty and therefore the Inspector's comments were overridden. This is a similar situation to the Luton Airport decision in which, when deciding applications involving major infrastructure, some harm is unavoidable. However, in such cases it was decided that the duty can be fulfilled through mitigations put in place and off-site financial contributions. Considerable weight was attributed to the increased number of jobs that would be made by the film studio in the area and the education facilities that will be on site.

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1. The Committee NOTED the updates in the paper and endorsed the responses made in relation to applications

25/26.23 Planning Policy Casework Update Q3 2025/26

The Planning Committee were informed by Planning Officers about policy developments.

Buckinghamshire Council Local Plan

A response has been submitted, mostly supportive and offering advice on improving the plan's compliance with national policy and legislation. Buckinghamshire Council are continuing to engage with CCB officers as the plan progresses.

Eye and Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan Submission Draft 2011-2035

A response was submitted in support of the plan and noting the promotion of a "valued landscape status." This phrase has been omitted from the proposed new NPPF.

23.1 Reforms to the Statutory consultee system (submitted 13th January 2026)

Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser (Policy) informed the committee of the response to the recent consultation on proposed revisions to statutory consultees in the planning system. Following a discussion at the December Board meeting, a response was submitted requesting the Chilterns Conservation Board be included as a statutory consultee for planning applications and for Local Plans. This would grant the Board more profile and weight within the planning system. If this is not permitted, Officers will pursue the opportunity to formalise more robust engagement protocols with Local Authorities. The response also requested that Natural England clarifies the status of its own responses with regard to National Landscapes. The Chair commended the Officer on an excellent piece of work and gave thanks.

23.2 Introduction to the NPPF review (live consultation)

Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy and Planning informed the Committee of the current consultation on a revised National Planning Policy Framework that came out before Christmas and runs until March 2026. As yet there has not been a meaningful discussion with colleagues from other National Landscapes, which will likely be done via email. Careful consideration is needed as to what the changes will mean. Some elements are to be welcomed, such as a much clearer division in the proposed NPPF for Local Plan making and decision making, along with a much clearer indication of what is a policy rather than supporting text which should be helpful for interpretation. It is frustrating that the existing faults within the NPPF have not been addressed. It was noted that the use of "valued landscape" has been omitted. It was questioned if there was anything related to giving weight to not developing certain types of land, following a recent report about national security effected by lack of biodiversity and food security issues. He surmised that a co-ordinated response would be ideal but would want the Chilterns National Landscape to contribute significantly to this.

1. The Committee NOTED the contents of the paper

25/26.24 Urgent Business

None.

25/26.25 Date of Next and Future Meetings

- Thursday 30th April 2026, Chinnor Offices
- Thursday 29th October 2026, Chinnor Offices

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The meeting was closed at 13.05.

The Chair.....

Date.....

Item 8 Planning Committee Work Programme**Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning**Purpose and Summary:** To update the Committee on progress with various initiatives that are part of the Committee's work programme.**Background**

1. This paper provides summary information on a number of matters relevant to the Planning Committee's work programme not dealt with in detail elsewhere in the agenda.

Committee membership

2. Membership of the Committee remains as follows, with one Secretary of State vacancy:

Local Authority members	Cllr Robert Carington (Buckinghamshire) Cllr James Norman (South Oxon) Cllr Louise Price (Three Rivers) – Deputy Chair Cllr Philip Spicer (Central Beds)(recognising likely online attendance)
Secretary of State members	Simon Mortimer Matthew Stanton <i>One vacancy</i>
Parish Council members	Cllr Charles Hussey (Bucks Parish Councils) Cllr Sue Rowland (Oxon Parish Councils) - Chair

3. In addition, the Committee continues to benefit from two co-opted (non-voting) members, Chris Hannington and Paul Hayes.

Planning team capacity

4. Further to discussions at the March Board meeting, which confirmed the Board's commitment to the planning function, the CEO has supported us in provisionally securing resources to allow the following capacity in the Planning Team:
 - a. Head of Planning* - Matt Thomson (2.5 days/week)
 - b. Planning Adviser (DM) – Mike Stubbs (2 days/week)
 - c. Planning Adviser (Policy) – Victoria Thomson (2 days/week)
 - d. Additional flexibility for capacity from Planning Advisers (0.5 days/week)
5. This totals 7 days (FTE) of professional planning activity per week, which is a 40% increase over the last strategic decision on capacity when the former Principal Planning Officer role was last advertised in 2020. A key element of this (*) is a rationalisation of the former Head of Strategy & Planning role, renaming it as Head of Planning, redistributing responsibility for "strategy" matters among the Senior Leadership Team, and enabling a greater focus on planning matters. All of the above is subject to approval by Executive Committee in May as part of the annual planning and budget-setting processes.

Local Elections on 7 May 2026

6. On Thursday 7 May 2026, local elections will be held in various local authorities across England. The only elections directly affecting the Chilterns National Landscape are for one-third of the members of Three Rivers District Council, which includes the seat of our Board Chair and Deputy Chair of this Committee, Cllr Louise Price.
7. As a public body, the Chilterns Conservation Board – including its Planning Committee – must adhere to certain standards of conduct during the “pre-election period of sensitivity” in the run-up to the election and until the outcome of the election is known, in order to avoid any possibility of appearing to favour one party or candidate over any other, or to provide material that may be used for political gain.

Planning Function Technical Approach (Team Plan)

8. Beginning this year, teams, programmes or functions within the CCB are being encouraged to prepare what is known as a ‘Technical Approach’ (TA) to the programming of their future work (up to 2030). These TAs can be said to serve as a team or programme plan, but are not so named to avoid confusion with the proliferation of other ‘plans’ CCB is required to, or has chosen to, produce. Each TA will need to respond to the Management Plan, the Management Plan Delivery Plan, the organisation’s 5-year Strategy and the Annual Business Plan, and will help to inform individuals’ objectives. A template for the TAs has been developed by the Landscapes Team.
9. The Planning Team is at the beginning of developing the Planning Function TA (PFTA), since CCB’s Organisational Strategy and Annual Business Plan are still in preparation (through the Board and Executive Committee). Naturally, the Planning Committee is the key stakeholder in the PFTA, and we will engage on its development going forwards.
10. It is not the intention of this paper to brief this Committee on the form and content of the overarching CCB plans, which are still in development. The following summarises the context for the PFTA in the emerging CCB plans:
 - a. Under ‘Outcome A’ (“The Chilterns’ natural beauty and landscape character is conserved / enhanced, making it more resilient to threats including climate change and development”), the following objectives are defined:
 - i. “the provision of standing and bespoke advice on planning and development matters for decision makers, especially local planning authorities” – i.e. maintaining, reviewing and adding to our published guidance (and guidance from the NLA), e.g. the Chilterns Colour Palette
 - ii. “Influence national, regional and local planning policies through consultation responses and ongoing engagement with policy makers” – i.e. policy casework (Victoria), including reviewing our model development plan policy, and working with the NLA
 - iii. “Influence decisions on planning proposals through consultation responses” – i.e. DM casework (Mike), including reviewing our consultation protocol
 - b. Under ‘Outcome D’ (“We deliver our statutory purposes more effectively through improved strategic partnerships enabling a more sustainable operating model for the organisation”), the following areas of work are currently under consideration:

- i. Re-convening a Planning Forum, as a sub-forum of the proposed CNL Forum/Partnership.
- ii. Contributing planning and development input to the review of the Management Plan (from 2027/28 onwards)
- iii. Improving impact with policy- and decision-makers (especially LPAs) by pivoting to be more of a critical friend to LPA planning teams, rather than part of the NGO background noise
- iv. Raising awareness (internally and externally) through communications – including our Planning Updates and Briefings, training for members and staff, improved reporting on our website, etc.

11. We are at a very early stage, in the context of the wider plans that are unlikely to be finalised before the June Board meeting, but officers would welcome the Committee's feedback on the above, in particular any priorities that might be missing.

Improved communications – Planning Updates and Briefings

12. A new Planning Update for April will be finalised and circulated shortly after the Committee meeting, taking account of feedback already received from recipients of the Update (for which, many thanks). Further observations, feedback or suggestions would be welcome, either in the meeting or further to circulation of the Update.

Contacting the Planning team

13. The planning team (not a formal team within CCB's organisational structure) continues to comprise:

- Matt Thomson, Head of Planning (title tbc) – oversight and strategy
- Mike Stubbs, Planning Adviser (Development Management) – planning and related applications, neighbourhood planning
- Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser (Policy) – national, regional and local planning policy

14. Mike and Victoria are contracted as consultants to the Board in relation to specific areas of work only.

15. For clarity we use the term "planning function" to describe both (a) activities undertaken by the CCB on planning matters, and (b) the combination of the planning team, Planning Committee, and other CCB officers and volunteers who may from time to time be working on planning matters.

16. All planning enquiries and intelligence relating to planning matters should continue to be addressed to planning@chilterns.org.uk. This mailbox is monitored by all three members of the team with protocols in place to ensure correspondence is dealt with by the appropriate team member. Please do not email or copy in the Head of Strategy & Planning on any planning-related correspondence, unless it either relates to the operation of Planning Committee, or is of a sensitive nature.

17. While we do have a telephone line (01844 355507) this is only accessible to the Head of Planning and is not monitored full-time – please do leave a voicemail, but emails are preferred.

Future Committee dates

18. The remaining date for 2026 is:

- Thu 29 October 2026 at the CCB's offices in Chinnor, starting at 10am.

19. It is proposed to retain this date pending consideration of the future of Planning Committee.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee:

- a. NOTES these updates.**
- b. OFFERS OBSERVATIONS on the matters covered in the paper.**

Item 9 **Future of Planning Committee****Author:** Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning**Purpose and Summary:** To consider options for the future operation of the Planning Committee, including as an Advisory Panel or similar, and recommend an agreed position for approval by the Board.**Background**

1. This paper sets out matters relating to the operation of the Board's Planning Committee, including the cases for and against maintaining a Committee, or regularising established practice by moving to an 'Advisory Panel' model. Officers recommend the latter approach, but there are questions to be answered in relation to that, as a decision cannot be made lightly.

What is the purpose of having a Committee?

2. The CCB was created in 2004 through an [Establishment Order](#) made by Parliament, which applies local government legislation to the organisation's governance. Committees are a key part of that legislation, enabling the discharge of an authority's functions without needing to engage a full meeting of the council. Functions may also be delegated further to sub-committees or directly to officers, depending on the nature and impact of the function and decisions relating to it.
3. Because local authorities have statutory powers that can directly influence people's lives, the wellbeing of individuals and communities, and in some cases restrict their rights, there are checks and balances applying to how functions are discharged, and by whom. The nature and significance of functions discharged, or decisions made, by committees requires the following, by way of example:
 - a. Committee meetings must be open to the public (with limited exceptions for certain types of sensitive actions).
 - b. Agenda items must be appropriately publicised, and there are restrictions on what actions can be taken without publicity.
 - c. Members of the public must be given the opportunity to address the committee should they have an interest in an agenda item and request to do so.
 - d. Committees must comprise members in proportion to the overall membership of the authority.
 - e. Members must attend meetings in person to be involved in decision-making (i.e. to have a vote).
 - f. Meetings are subject to a quorum (i.e. a minimum attendance) in order for business to be transacted.
 - g. Accurate and often detailed minutes of business transacted need to be recorded, approved, and maintained in perpetuity.
4. These requirements can be administratively burdensome and/or constrain the operation of any meeting where the business being transacted by the committee does not warrant the application of the sorts of checks and balances outlined above. Since the CCB has

no direct planning powers, and no planning functions that directly impact upon people's lives or restrict their rights, but rather advises other decision makers in relation to the interests of the National Landscape, the requirements applied to operating a committee are unnecessary for the kind of business transacted by the Planning Committee. Such business includes actions such as:

- a. Noting material circulated for information.
 - b. Advising or making recommendations to another decision-making body, including the Board (which body may itself be subject to appropriate checks and balances).
 - c. Retrospectively debating or endorsing actions already taken by another committee, sub-committee or officer under their delegated authority.
5. The UK government is increasingly acting to reduce the administrative burdens placed on (and hence resources required by) local authorities in making decisions unnecessarily through committees that could be being made by officers, albeit still with other checks and balances. The direction of travel is towards more decisions that align with existing policies and priorities being taken by officers under delegated authority.

Why did the Board set up the Planning Committee?

6. There has been a 'Planning Committee' for the Chilterns AONB since long before the establishment of the CCB. Early on, under the Chilterns Standing Conference (CSC), this 'Committee' functioned more like a 'forum' comprising members and officers from the host local authorities, representatives from other relevant bodies, and officers and volunteers from the CSC's small secretariat, and held a purely advisory and information-sharing role.
7. At the first formal meeting of the CCB in January 2005, the Board decided to set up both an Executive Committee and a Planning Committee (agenda item 10). The general justification for creating committees was described as follows: "The Board will only meet a few times per year and is unlikely to be able to cope with the level of work. Accordingly it may consider delegating some of its functions to Committees and the Chief Officer." Five paragraphs of the paper set out the justification for, purpose of and composition of the Executive Committee, but only the composition of the Planning Committee was described. (It is worth noting that at around the same time, a 'Standards Committee' and a 'Technical Panel' also comprised part of the CCB's governance structures.)
8. The Scheme of Delegation (approved by the Board at the same meeting) delegated to the Planning Committee the making of "all representations on behalf of the Board in relation to planning policy and planning applications", with the option to refer significant items back to the Board, and to delegate "such of its functions as it considers desirable and expedient" to the planning officer (i.e. much the same authority as was in place up to the approval of the current scheme of delegation in September 2025, which now delegates most functions directly to officers, uniquely subject to retrospective endorsement by the Committee).
9. The purpose of reducing the amount of work undertaken at full Board meetings in relation to planning matters (especially responding to consultations) could be achieved equally effectively by delegating authority to officers, with or without the opportunity or requirement to seek the expertise and advice of Board members. Indeed, *all 'non-planning' consultation responses* are (and always have been) delegated to officers without the need to refer to a committee, unless the CCB has no applicable policy or there would be a conflict with an applicable policy, in which case the Board should be

engaged – it is by no means clear whether the Board has always been engaged with non-planning consultations that raise new policy questions.

Do other Conservation Boards have a Planning Committee?

10. No. There is only one other Conservation Board, in the Cotswolds, and they do not convene a Planning Committee. Their Constitution's scheme of delegation is (in your officers' view) complex and arbitrary, delegating authority for consultation responses to officers, unless the timing of the consultation allows them to raise the consultation at either a Board or Executive Committee meeting, in which case that opportunity must be used regardless of the nature of the consultation. All consultation responses must be retrospectively endorsed by the Executive Committee. There is also a Planning and Infrastructure Working Group, which provides less formal advice to officers, and considers new and amended policy positions (for Board approval).
11. The outcome of the above is that officers are constantly reporting to and seeking approval from either the Board or the Executive Committee, ensuring accountability and openness, but without the perceived benefit of the optics of having a 'Planning' Committee.

What is the nature of CCB's planning function?

12. CCB has no statutory planning functions, but provides advice through consultation responses, engagement with communities, developers and decision-makers, and through published guidance documents. Our advice relates to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape, and of promoting the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities, taking into account for both purposes matters such as the wellbeing of communities, the operation of farming and forestry, and the prevention of pollution. Our advice on those matters is balanced by decision-makers with other objectives of the planning system. As a result, the discharge of CCB's planning functions has no direct impact on people's lives, wellbeing or their rights. The need for the openness and accountability provided by Committee operation in support of this advisory role is debatable.

How is the status of CCB's Planning Committee resolutions viewed?

13. Most of the outputs of Planning Committee discussions (other than retrospective endorsement of submitted responses) comprise informal advice, or a steer, for officers as to the broad approach to be taken in a consultation response. Occasionally there is formal sign-off of a draft response. These are all in the context of the function of responding to consultations being delegated directly to officers by the Board. The same could be achieved with an Advisory Panel.
14. While there is anecdotal evidence that decision makers have applied additional weight to submissions that have been presented as having been considered and signed off by CCB's Planning Committee, there is no evidence that a different outcome would have resulted had the submission been considered and signed off by a "Planning Panel" or any other person or group (including a Head of Planning, the CEO or the Board). In addition, the sample size is extremely small, since very few submissions are fully considered and signed off by the Planning Committee, and the status of those submissions would not necessarily have been picked up by the decision-maker. It stands to reason that some sort of higher-level validation or endorsement of an officer response would matter to some decision makers if it was picked up, but not that there would be any additional cachet from this being a "Committee", especially given that the particular status of the Committee may not be understood. Having submissions signed by a "Head

of Planning” who is a chartered town planner may hold more status than them being signed off by a Committee.

Issues with operation of a Committee

15. The requirements of operating a Committee (see above) have the following issues, several of which we have experienced direct problems with.
16. Meetings being open to the public: The value of open meetings, where difficult or controversial decisions are made that directly impact people’s lives, are well known, and rightly a part of public decision-making, supported by e.g. the Aarhus Convention. We do not have much experience of members of the public showing interest in CCB’s Planning Committee, although development promoters have often expressed interest in presenting their case directly to the Committee (including recently the National Trust’s proposals for Ashridge, which included a site visit).
17. Despite the general low-level of interest, and the fact that the Committee doesn’t make decisions that directly impact on people, we are still required to publicise all meetings accordingly (which includes a statutory notice period, and restrictions on being able to determine matters that have not been publicised). If members of the public did want to attend meetings, we would almost certainly have to hire an external meeting space, and this would be an additional cost to CCB.
18. Operating as an Advisory Panel would remove the *requirement* to have meetings open to the public, publicise agendas accordingly, and restrict discussions to what has been publicised. However, it would not *prevent* us from holding meetings in public if we chose to.
19. Restrictions on Committee membership: CCB’s committees must by law be constituted from members drawn from the three appointing groups as near as possible to the composition of the whole Board. This constrains the selection of (voting) members, and potentially reduces the opportunity to facilitate the most appropriate range of skills, interests, geographic coverage and/or diversity. For some time it was difficult to recruit LA appointees to the Committee because of (incorrect) advice that this would prevent their appointment to the LA’s own Planning Committee(s); recently we have had difficulty recruiting Secretary of State appointees. Both recruitment issues reduced the pool of committee members available to ensure quoracy (see also below). Conversely, there are no legal constraints on co-opting (non-Board) members to the Committee, since their role is purely advisory, and they cannot vote. The Constitution currently sets a maximum number of co-optees to the Committee at 4, but that could be altered.
20. An Advisory Panel would be entirely free of the legal constraints, but subject to any terms of reference determined by the Board, including guidelines on representation from appointing groups, geographic areas or different cultural/economic backgrounds, etc, if it chose to, to promote accountability etc.
21. Quoracy: To be quorate, and therefore discharge the functions delegated to it, each meeting must be attended *in person* by at least one-third of its full membership and at least one member from each appointing group. Members attending online cannot contribute to quorum and cannot vote on matters before the Committee. Since January 2024 only three (out of eight) Planning Committee meetings have been quorate.
22. Being inquorate prevents decisions being made, including minor decisions like electing a chair or approving previous meetings’ minutes. However, the meeting can lawfully continue as an informal discussion, which can provide officers with a steer on current

and future work. Fortunately for the CCB, all matters brought to the Planning Committee relate, in effect, to advice to officers, which in turn relates to CCB's advice to other decision-makers. Other than being unable to sign previous meetings' minutes, being inquorate has had little impact on the achievement of the Planning Function's work programme, other than the unnecessary administration of the Committee.

23. Removing statutory quoracy constraints would also enable members to attend online, removing the risk of inquoracy, encouraging higher attendance from existing members, and more volunteers from across the Board. It could potentially reduce costs, including through payment of expenses and through reducing the potential need to hire alternative meeting space.
24. Expedient decision-making: While it is a key element of the current discussion that the Planning Committee rarely makes formal decisions that discharge the Board's functions and which would justify the checks and balances of a formal Committee, the kinds of decisions the Committee does make (which are usually made in response to a request from officers on the appropriate balance to be taken in relation to a consultation, or relate to signing off a draft policy position for approval by the Board), could be made in ways other than a meeting, including agreement by email, without needing to follow Constitutional 'urgency' procedures imposed on Committee decisions.
25. Accurate records of meetings: CCB is fortunate to have access to an experienced and professional Clerk who takes excellent, clear and accurate minutes of our meetings. Much about the nature of formal minutes is set out in legislation, or at least in good practice guidance. That formal style may not be necessary or appropriate for a different type of group, but accurate notes would still be necessary. It would be our intention to retain the services of the Clerk to record notes of a Panel, if that was the option selected by the Board.

Accountability

26. A key element of the Scheme of Delegation in the current Constitution (approved in September 2025) is that functions are only delegated to officers where the discharge of that function complies with the Board's policies and priorities: the Board is empowered to hold officers to account in that regard.
27. All decisions of the Planning Committee are already advisory: they advise officers or make recommendations to the Board. In practice, the matter of accountability rests with the professionalism of officers, ultimately accountable to the Board. The importance of issues with the accountability of Committee decisions are diminished when those decisions are only ever, in practice, in the form of advice. Rarely, if ever, has the Committee challenged or overturned the position recommended by officers (on a consultation response or similar): the only example of a vote being taken by the Planning Committee during the current Head of Planning's tenure, confirmed the position of officers.
28. Critical strategic matters, such as approving CCB policy positions or approving a consultation response that does not align with existing CCB positions, are already reserved for the decision of the Board.
29. Advice given to officers by the Committee (and even the Board) is always, to a certain extent, subject to the matter of which members are in attendance at the meeting in question. Membership of the Committee changes from year to year, and sometimes more frequently, and the accountability of advice to officers is also affected by meetings being inquorate.

30. It is officers' position that current levels of accountability would be maintained with the operation of an Advisory Panel. It is noted, however, that this would best be achieved by operating the Panel with a defined (limited) membership, similar to (but not necessarily constrained in the same way as – see also above) the current Committee.
31. One of the options presented at the March Board meeting allowed for Panel meetings to be convened on the basis of inviting all Board members, with the Panel then comprising whichever members were available. On reflection (and in particular drawing on observations from the Committee Chair, Cllr Rowland), it is recognised that this model could be problematic as a result of increasing the risk of inconsistency. Having an identified core group of members facilitates opportunities for keeping members up-to-date with changes in planning legislation and policy, etc., and enables engagement with strategic matters over time. There is also a risk that inviting all Board members would result in fewer actual attendees because each member assumes that some of the other 26 members will attend (aka the “bystander effect” or the “volunteer’s dilemma”).

Recommended Solution

32. Officers recommend replacing the existing Planning Committee with an advisory group to be known as the **Planning Panel**. The purpose of doing so is simply to regularise established practice (i.e. that the Planning Committee provides *advice* to officers and other decision-makers, including the Board, and does not itself discharge any Board functions) and remove unnecessary barriers to the most effective and responsive operation of a forum for the Planning Team to engage with Board members (without swamping the Board itself).
33. There are many options for how the Planning Panel could be convened and operated, which would need to be presented in Terms of Reference. It is suggested that officers work with the Committee (or a sub-group of the Committee) via email on draft Terms of Reference to be presented to the Board in June.
34. Considerations for the Terms of Reference would include:
- a. Purposes/functions: These would be based on the existing matters delegated to the Planning Committee, and to Officers. It is strongly suggested that retrospective endorsement of submissions made is amended in favour of noting submissions made and drawing conclusions from trends and outcomes, pivoting to a more forward-looking role for the Panel. The focus would be on advice, rather than decisions.
 - b. Membership:
 - i. As noted above, on reflection officers agree with a defined, limited membership, facilitating skills development and consistency.
 - ii. An appropriate size of the Panel may be determined by considering how to get the best balance between accountability to our appointing groups (the sole current criterion), skills/experience, geographical coverage and diversity. That balance may be facilitated (as currently) through the co-option of non-Board members.
 - iii. It was accepted at the Board that Panel members should be entitled to an allowance and/or to reasonable expenses.
 - c. Openness:

- i. Should meetings be open to the public (generally or by invitation), and to what ends and with what restrictions?
 - ii. Should meetings be open to other Board members (all Committee meetings are – but non-Committee members cannot vote)?
 - iii. Should papers and/or minutes/notes be made publicly available?
- d. Quorum: Should there be a quorum? It is officers' view that online attendance should be allowed, and attendees should contribute to quorum however they attend. This will reduce costs and encourage attendance.
- e. Frequency of meetings: It is suggested that meetings continue on the current Planning Committee model (i.e. three scheduled meetings per year, largely following quarterly reporting cycles with a break in the summer – additional, ad hoc or extraordinary meetings would be more straightforward without Committee constraints).
- f. Nature of reporting:
 - i. It is suggested that the Planning Team's new monthly Updates form the basis of reporting, supplemented by access to our Briefings and full submissions made on consultations (through SharePoint, in line with the idea of the 'real-time system'); this would reduce duplication of reporting effort.
 - ii. Papers for meetings could focus on (a) drawing out trends to inform future priorities, (b) developing new policy positions and reviewing existing ones (for Board approval), and (c) examining 'live' casework, and reducing the focus on past submissions.
 - iii. Encouraging Panel members to submit either (a) requests for papers or briefings on specific topics, or (b) their own papers for the Panel's consideration or information.
 - iv. Reporting from the Panel to the Board would comprise notes of the Panel meetings, supplementing the monthly Planning Updates that they already receive, as well as papers covering specific advice/recommendations from the Panel for the Board's attention (e.g. new policy positions, requests for resources, etc.)

35. The above proposal is made in the context of:

- a. The increased capacity for the Planning Team and the adjusted role of the Head of (ex-Strategy and) Planning outlined in the previous item;
- b. The monthly Planning Updates and specific Planning Briefings now being produced in response to the Board's request for improved communications on planning matters;
- c. Planning training for members and staff being explored as part of the Planning Team's work programme for 2026/27;
- d. Further evolution of the Planning Function being considered as part of the Business Plan, including improved engagement with LPAs, re-convening the

Planning Forum, and further enhancements to information made available through SharePoint (the 'real-time system').

36. Should the Committee (and subsequently the Board) prefer to retain the Planning Committee, officers would still advocate for:
- a. A renewed focus on policy development, rather than reviewing the details of past submissions;
 - b. Removing the requirement for submissions made by officers under delegated authority to be retrospectively endorsed by the Committee; and
 - c. A request from the Planning Committee that the Board considers convening additional standing committees in relation to other significant aspects of the Board's work that are currently not subject to formal member scrutiny.

Recommendations:

1. **That the Committee:**
 - a. **APPROVES** in principle the proposal to transform into an advisory group to be known as the Planning Panel;
 - b. **CONSIDERS** the options in paragraph 34 for matters to be included in the Terms of Reference, and **AGREES** any factors it considers appropriate;
 - c. **CONVENES** a working group to develop with officers draft Terms of Reference for the Panel on that basis, for sign-off in principle ahead of the June Board meeting by email; and
 - d. **AUTHORISES** officers, with the endorsement of the Committee chair, to recommend that the Board convenes the Planning Panel and approves its Terms of Reference at its meeting in June.

Item 10 Development Management Casework update Q4 2025/26**Author:** Michael Stubbs, Planning Adviser (Development Management)**Purpose and Summary:** To inform the Committee about and seek endorsement of the responses made under delegated authority concerning the planning and related applications as listed and to update the Committee on any outcomes**Background****(i)** A summary of submissions (support, objection in principle, comments over details, appeals and 'others' covering EIA matters and pre-application responses).

New applications/appeals since 1 st January 2026 = 22	Appeal representation = 1 Comments over details = 5 Comments in support/support = 8 Objections in principle = 3 Others = 1 (NSIP/DCO) No Comments (clarification to Planning Committee) = 4
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(ii) A summary of outcomes (CCB impacts upon decisions) 1 Jan to 31 March 2026.

Applications granted to which CCB Positively commented or supported = 2	<p>At land from north of Frith Hill to the south of Leather Lane Great Missenden, Bucks. (HS2) PL/25/6606/HS2, works comprising, South Heath Cutting (Part Of), Railway Track Alignment, drainage ditches, headwalls; vehicle restraint system, overbridge footway structure, including maintenance access stairs, handrails and working platforms for accommodation overbridge and footway overbridge. Granted 24th November 2025.</p> <p>Spring Chamber Bridleways Wendover, Bucks. BC – Aylesbury. PL/25/4131/FA. Installation of a spring chamber and flow monitoring chamber with associated pipework for the requirements of HS2, including an attached power box with roof-mounted solar panel, a headwall outflow structure, the reprofiling of an existing drainage ditch, stockproof fencing, a temporary access track and temporary laydown area for construction. Granted 12th December 2025. NOTE for Planning Committee: The officer's report noted a general level of support from the CCB.</p>
Applications granted to which CCB had objected = 0	None.
Applications refused to which CCB had objected = 2	<p>Mop End Farm Mop End Lane Mop End, Bucks. BC- Chiltern & South Bucks. PL/25/2447/FA. Proposed battery energy storage facility and associated works. Refused 10th March 2026 and including in the reasons '<i>a major development in the National Landscape for which a case of exceptional circumstances does not exist under paragraph 190 of the NPPF</i>'.</p> <p>Land at Bridle Path, Woodcote, Oxon. SODC. P25/S3372/O. Outline: Development of 41 dwellings forming a later living</p>

	<p>community, including a community hub building, access from Bridle Path, infrastructure, open space and landscaping. All matters reserved except for means of access. Refused 27th February 2026, including in the reasoning <i>'furthermore the proposal would constitute a major development within the Chilterns National Landscape and it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances that are in the public interest that would justify this major development within the National Landscape'</i>. NOTE for Planning Committee; CCB submitted an objection, but it did not load to the SODC planning portal. If this decision is appealed CCB would propose to make representations.</p>
<p>Applications refused to which CCB had commented `= 2</p>	<p>Land To North of Little Green Lane, Croxley Green, Herts. Three Rivers DC. 24/2073/OUT. Outline Application: Development of up to 600 residential dwellings (Use Class C3(a)), construction of a 5-bedroom property for children's social care and supported living (Use Class C3(b)). Two vehicular access points from Little Green Lane and further pedestrian / cycleway accesses. A one form entry primary school (Use Class F1(a)) (plus expansion land for a two-form entry primary school. Refused 30th Jan 2026 with reasons dealing with (1) Green Belt, (2) Impact on nearby Ancient Woodland and (3) Absence of a s106 legal agreement.</p> <p>Land South of Greenfield Road and Clayhill Farm, Greenfield Road, Westoning, Beds (Sampshill Solar Farm). Central Bedfordshire CB/25/02017/FULL. Construction of a temporary Solar Farm, to include the installation of Solar Panels with transformers, a substation, a DNO control room, a customer substation, GRP comms cabin, security fencing, landscaping and other associated infrastructure and works. Refused on 20th February 2026 with reasons dealing with (1) Green Belt (2) Impact on the local landscape (3) construction traffic impacts and (4) Insufficient ecological surveys.</p>
<p>Planning Appeal decisions = 3</p>	<p>Land adjacent to Digberry Farm Digberry Lane near Park Corner, Oxfordshire SODC P25/S2124/FUL for the material change in use of the land to a mixed use, comprising agricultural grazing for horses and a caravan site, to provide residential accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, comprising a single-family pitch. Refused 14th November 2025 due to the resulting harm to the Chilterns National Landscape. Appeal allowed (granted) on 13th March 2026. The Inspector was clear as to the landscape harm, finding at para 15. <i>'To summarise, I find the development undermines the attractiveness of Huntercombe End as a rural lane and the field's contribution to the area's open countryside qualities. Also, residential caravans are an unusual feature within the locality. The single pitch is a small scale development. It has a localised visual effect that could be further reduced through additional, sensitive planting on land within the appellant's ownership. Even so, new planting would not fully mitigate the harmful effects of the development through introducing a residential use into part of the countryside. Activities and lighting associated with the site also spoil the rural nature of the NL. The proposal did not conserve the NL'</i>. The lack of supply for such land was deemed sufficient to outweigh this harm.</p> <p>Land at West of Field Cottage Buslins Lane, Chartridge, Chesham (BC-C&SB, written representations). PINS 3356484. Enforcement notice appeal to remove surfacing/hardstanding outside the permitted area. Two appeals A and B, decided on 12th Jan 2026. The Appeal A enforcement notice was upheld and required the applicant to <i>'Remove all hardcore, scalplings and other hard surface materials imported onto the Land in connection with the identified breach of planning control, from the Land and</i></p>

	<p><i>restore the Land to the condition it was in prior to the commencement of the unauthorised development'. This remedy benefits the National Landscape. Appeal B was deemed legally invalid. Applications for an award of costs against the LPA were dismissed.</i></p> <p>Land to the south of Bishopstone (Kimblewick Solar). Solar farm with a generating capacity of 40MW (AC) and ancillary structures. PINS 3372885. Planning appeal by Hearing method on 16th December 2025. Appeal allowed (granted) on 14th January 2026. The CCB had not raised objections, albeit the LPA did refer to harm to the CNLs setting in their evidence. The Inspector did not find any harm to the setting and dealt with the new protected landscape duty at paragraph 26. <i>'The statutory duty at section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) requires a decision-maker to seek to further the statutory purposes of the Chilterns NL through conserving and enhancing its natural beauty. In addition, great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty as a National Landscape, in accordance with paragraph 189 of the Framework. As the proposal would not result in harm to the setting of the Chilterns NL, there would not be conflict with paragraph 189, and nor with Policy NE3 of the VALP and Policy DM30 of the WDLP, which have similar objectives. The statutory purposes would be achieved'.</i></p>
<p>Planning appeal decisions outstanding = 2</p>	<p>White Cross Farm, nr Wallingford (OCC). Sand and gravel extraction impacting the Thames Path and the setting of the CNL. PINS reference 3361505. Reasons for refusal include harm to the CNL. Planning Inquiry opened 15th July 2025. Decision pending. CCB raised objections.</p> <p>Land at Bulbourne nr Northchurch (DBC). Construction of a nursing home (Use Class C2) of up to 67 bedrooms for dementia care with separate bin/cycle store building, electricity substation and associated works and landscaping with all matters reserved except for the construction of access junction and road on Land at Bulbourne Wood, Northchurch, Berkhamsted. PINS reference 6003892. Reasons for refusal include harm to the CNL. Virtual informal hearing to be held on 28th April 2026. CCB raised objections.</p>

1. **New CCB responses on planning applications from 1 January to 31 March 2026 are listed in Appendix 1**, and current live casework is in **Appendix 2**. The Planning Adviser will provide reflections on the outcomes of CCB representations at the 30 April 2026 Planning Committee. Matters for the Planning Committee to note are set out at the end of each section.

Recommendations:

1. **That the Committee:**
 - a. **NOTES** the updates in this paper, and **ENDORSES** the responses made in connection with the applications listed in Appendix 1, and 2.

APPENDIX 1**New CCB Responses on Planning Applications, January-March 2026**

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
Grand Union Canal Transfer, Phase Two Public Consultation, February to April 2026	CBC & DBC By email only contact @guctransfer.co.uk	Nationally significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) / Development Consent Order (DCO).	Pre-NSIP/DCO	<p>CCB Comments/some in support of the PEIR or Preliminary Environmental Information report</p> <p>Key points as:</p> <p>1. The CCB would seek a discussion with the project team focusing on the Chilterns National Landscape, which will include our North Chilterns Farm Cluster.</p> <p>2. The CCB were pleased to see that the PEIR's non-technical summary (page 5) cited tangible benefit that '<i>... the proposed development aims to reduce reliance on other water sources, including chalk aquifers, that support rare chalk streams habitats</i>'.</p> <p>However, 3. We could not find any specific content that reassures us on this headline aspiration.</p> <p>4. The CCB has assumed that the red line application area (the preliminary order limits) will need to be extended to cover the CNL. The impacts upon the aquifer and chalk streams will be required to satisfy the rigours of Environmental Impact Assessment.</p> <p>5. The CCB welcomes greater information on groundwater impacts within the chalk landscape of the CNL and details of proposed excavation and (micro) tunnelling, for example.</p> <p>6. The CCB is keen to meet with the applicant to focus upon the next steps.</p>	31 st March 2026
Land Adjacent to Greenvale Nurseries, Watling Street, Caddington, Beds.	CBC CB/26/00605/FULL	Change of use of agricultural land for extension to the traveller site. Siting of 20 static	Pending	<p>CCB Comments, some in support</p> <p>The site is wholly within the National Landscape and great weight, therefore, must be given to the conservation and</p>	9th April 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
		caravans, 9 tourer pitches, parking, 2 amenity blocks, play area and an attenuation pond.		enhancement of scenic/natural beauty, consistent with the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed site area does amount to a considerable extension of the existing site and, inevitably therefore, results in landscape harm. We appreciate that the balancing of harm against benefits will be a matter for the Local Planning Authority. If the LPA were minded approving this application, then any such decision would require a comprehensive landscape screening strategy, accepting that a mature tree screen already exists along the road frontage. In such a case and if so minded to approve, it would be preferable to reduce the built coverage of the site and increase the open/green and undeveloped land, to both soften the appearance within the host landscape character and to accommodate BNG within the site, as opposed to an off-site contribution as is currently envisaged	
Land at Quill Hall Lane Amersham, Buckinghamshire.	BC- Chiltern area. PL/26/01837/EI ASR	Request for an EIA Screening Opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) for the proposed residential-led development of land	Pending	<p>CCB Objection in principle dealing with the EIA Screening Opinion.</p> <p>'Great weight' must be given to the harm to the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) arising from this proposal, and the applicant's assumption that there is '<i>no significant effect</i>' to the National Landscape cannot be correct. The applicant's reference to the appeal decision at Little Chalfont (PL/21/4632/OA) does not affect the CNL's status in this case. That application was outside the CNL, with its eastern boundary opposite the CNL.</p> <p>On 16th March 2026, the informal consultation closed on the Council's emerging sites for the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire – site survey. We noted that some land at Quill Hall Lane is denoted for brownfield – employment (ref 3687). This proposal is clearly different and for a greenfield residential</p>	18th March 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
				development. This application therefore must be considered an unallocated site outside the Local Plan process.	
Land to the West of Stokenchurch Business Park Ibstone Road Stokenchurch, Bucks.	BC - Wycombe area. PL/26/00731/O A	Outline planning application for the erection of a mixed-use warehouse (Use Class B8), light industrial (Use Class E(g)(iii)) and general industrial (B2) unit, including ancillary office accommodation, vehicle/cycle parking, landscaping, and associated access improvements (matters to be considered at this stage: access, layout, scale and landscaping)	Pending	<p>CCB Comments, mostly in Support.</p> <p>This site is allocated in the Wycombe Local Plan 2019 as RUR10, and DM 20 also applies (Chilterns AONB).</p> <p>The prevailing National Landscape issues are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The delivery of the landscape-led approach in the allocation policy and 2. The delivery of the highest quality design as set out at DM30 criterion 1(c). By delivering these key issues, then the core legal and policy duties comprising the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape will be discharged. <p>We would support some reference to and incorporation of materials that deliver a modern interpretation of the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide and accompanying supplementary technical notes.</p> <p>We agree that this allocation does not fall within the major development category that triggers the exceptional development test in the NPPF at 190. Our rationale for this being the site's status as an allocation and the underlying Local Plan evidence base in the AONB Site Assessment Report of September 2017. The importance of the plan-led system requires such decisions to be evidence – led and supported through the examination of a Local Plan.</p> <p>On lighting we noted the overarching desire of the applicant's team to conserve the dark character of the landscape (7.77 of the supporting planning statement). We commend a</p>	31 st March 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
				best practice approach and would refer to our model policy in the new Chilterns Lighting Planning Guidance.	
Land at Slapton Road, Ivinghoe, Bucks	BC-Aylesbury area 25/02374/APP for the SANG and 24/02202/APP nearby housing application.	BC – Aylesbury area. Change of use of agricultural land to a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace).	Pending	<p>CCB Support</p> <p>This application, in promoting a SANG, is directed towards the protection of the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which covers nearly 1,300 hectares across Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. This involves mitigating the over- recreation of the SAC by deflecting such pressures to other sites, notably SANGs. The Chilterns Beechwoods SAC is an acknowledged special quality of the Chilterns and one that immeasurably contributes towards the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL).</p> <p>The Chilterns Conservation Board, therefore, supports the policy principles that underpin the delivery of an effective SANGs mitigation strategy.</p> <p>We noted an objection from the Parish Council. On the merits of the application the points raised by Natural England and the Parish Council will constitute matters to resolve. In an application of this type, which is set away from the National Landscape by some 375 metres (to the southeast) and sits within a wider landscape hinterland, the CCB would defer to comments raised by these bodies and, subject to their resolution, we would ask that appropriate weight is given to Natural England's SANGs policy. This application does fall within the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape.</p>	8 th Jan 2026
Land West of Kidmore End Road (edge of Reading)	SODC/PINS P25/S1431/O APP/Q31115/A/25/3377313	Outline application up to 70 dwellings	Refused on 3 rd December 2025 and appeal to open on 6 th May 2026.	<p>CCB No Comments (to clarify).</p> <p>NOTE for CCB Planning Committee: The CCB has clarified its stance on this application/appeal, to Kidmore End Parish Council (a Rule 6</p>	12th Feb 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
				<p>party i.e. formal party at the forthcoming appeal which commences 6th May 2026). CCB did not comment as the CNL's setting is not impacted, with a valued landscape and extensive woodland belt in-between. CCB supported the promotion of this valued landscape at the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan examination.</p> <p>The SODC refusal deals with the local landscape impacts but not the setting of the National Landscape.</p>	
Land East of Hemel Hempstead Rd, south of B487 (Redborne Road) and north of A4147 St Albans Road, Herts	Dacorum BC and St Albans DC 25/02916/MOA	Urban Extension comprising two new neighbourhoods (to the east of Hemel and within St Albans DC).	Pending	<p>CCB Comments, mostly in support.</p> <p>The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) is engaged with the Dacorum Local Plan to 2041 and in our very early thoughts on the 'Revised Strategy for Growth' (December 2023) we noted the Council's own acknowledgement of the opportunities posed by and sensitives around the vision for the Hemel Garden Communities (HGC), including the National Landscape, the Gade Valley and the SANGs requirements to protect the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC. As this East of Hemel proposal links to the wider network of GI and includes a country park, a large swathe of open land surrounding and within the growth area will link into the northern parcel (within the DBC area). We support this overall approach and the promotion of a network of ecological and nature conservation enhancements, as a key component of this overall vision. This approach can be found at Figure 3.2 of the supporting planning statement, itself drawn from the St Albans District Local Plan Part A submission version. Of course, a large part of the northern parcel to the HGC falls within Dacorum BC area and, therefore, the forthcoming Dacorum Local Plan.</p>	29th Jan 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
Land between Bank Mill Lane and London Rd Berkhamsted, Herts.	Dacorum BC 25/03126/OUT	Construction of a retirement (sheltered) development including 50% affordable 75 bed care home public open space and landscaping	Pending	<p>CCB Objection</p> <p>CCB's Objection is due to the applicant's disregard for the treatment of the River Bulbourne that flows through the site.</p> <p>We have set this as a holding objection because such design matters can be resolved. We consider this application to fall within the setting of the CNL due to the chalk streams inclusion.</p> <p>NOTE for CCB Planning Committee: In these comments we rely heavily on the new (2025) CCB Chalk Streams Planning Guidance.</p>	7 th Jan 2026
Manor Farm Ibstone Road, Ibstone, Bucks	BC-Wycombe area PL/25/4490/FA	Creation of a new landscape setting to Manor Farm including realignment of the Ha-Ha, formation of new pond, swimming pool and parking for adjacent church	Pending	<p>CCB Objection</p> <p>CCB's objection is based upon the proposed borehole and potential resulting aquifer/groundwater abstraction from the river Hamble.</p> <p>We have stated that a hydrological assessment would not offer the necessary assurances due to the complex hydrological relationship at stake. A simple remedy is to delete the proposed pond, which is for wild swimming / aesthetic purposes and not for any BNG purposes. NOTE for CCB Planning Committee: In these comments we rely heavily on the new (2025) CCB Chalk Streams Planning Guidance.</p>	9 th Jan 2026
The Spinney City Road Radnage Bucks	BC-Wycombe area PL/25/5077/FA	Demolition of former industrial buildings and erection of one dwelling in replacement.	Refused 11 th Feb 2026	<p>CCB No Comments (to clarify).</p> <p>This proposes redeveloping an unsightly brownfield (PDL) site between existing dwellings and into a new modern interpretation of the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide (CBDG). A part of the design assessment involves delivery of the CBDG.</p> <p>The CCB did not comment as the application falls within the protocol for consultation within</p>	2 nd Jan 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
				<p>the Management Plan. We deemed it acceptable in any event, but this application was refused permission on grounds of loss of a scattered business land use but also (reason 4) that, 'The <i>proposed development, by virtue of its design, massing, layout and appearance fails to respect the local context and the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the Chilterns National Landscape</i>'.</p> <p>NOTE for CCB Planning Committee: This case involves several interesting design judgments partially focusing upon the application of the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide.</p>	
Former Forest Glade Kennels Chinnor Hill Chinnor Oxon.	BC-Wycombe P25/S4043/S7 3 (Original permission. P18/S1674/O CCB)	Variation of condition 2 (approved plan) to reserved matters P21/S3143/R M following outline P18/S1674/O for 5 houses - variation to window positions and amended roof plans	Granted 24 th Feb 2026	<p>CCB Support.</p> <p>These are minor revisions to the fenestration and roofing design. The same materials palette, as previously approved, remain unaffected i.e. clay roofing, black vertical timber and brick.</p> <p>All these revisions are deemed to be acceptable</p>	21 st Jan 2026
Land to the south of Skimmers Field Holmer Green, Bucks	BC-Wycombe PL/25/5311/OA	Up to 130 dwellings including affordable housing, highways, public open space, landscaping and infrastructure (outline).	Pending	<p>CCB No Comments (to clarify).</p> <p>This site is around 210m from CNL at its closest point. It is largely shielded from the CNL by development to east, the A404 and undeveloped open land to the south. Views in and out to/from CNL would be glimpsed, at best. Mitigation in the LVA at 6.2.2 suggests mitigation planting and a new orchard. No impact upon the setting of the CNL.</p> <p>NOTE for CCB Planning Committee: In assessing the impacts on the setting of the CNL we have applied the CCB's Position Statement on Settings.</p>	13 th Jan 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
Land East of Benson Crowmarsh Gifford, Oxon	SODC P25/S4092/O	Outline for 195 homes with all matters reserved.	Pending	<p>CCB Comments over details</p> <p>This site and a small outlier of the CNL within the site, falls within the wider setting of the CNL but is heavily shielded from it by the road and landscape.</p> <p>CCB's comments dealt with mitigation details, including planting, materials, siting and the protection of a small section of CNL within the bypass road. The Setting of the CNL is affected/impacted in a very marginal, even negligible manner.</p>	21 st Jan 2026
Chilterns Gateway Centre nr Whipsnade, Beds	CBC CB/25/04056/FULL	Installation of new and replacement parking equipment including 7 new parking terminals, vehicular entry barriers, ANPR camera and 11 wooden signposts.	Pending	<p>CCB Support</p> <p>The proposed design and new equipment all fall within the operational footprint of the existing car park and are all appropriate.</p> <p>The CCB recommended that the barrier detailing is painted dark green, to be both recessive and to blend into the background view.</p>	12 th Feb 2026
Molins near Saunderton, Bucks.	BC-Wycombe area. PL/25/6761/VR C	Variation of conditions to 08/05740/FUL EA including materials and landscaping	Pending	<p>CCB Comments over details</p> <p>Generally supportive of the proposed design changes and additional landscaping, contingent on reassurances that the new glazing in the elevation (spandrel glass) and the non-spandrel glazing at the very top/roof edge are <u>not</u> lit and do not result in any light glare, glow or spill at all.</p> <p>CCB's new lighting guidance was copied to the case planning officer.</p>	12 th Feb 2026
Pitstone Quarry restoration, Pitstone Herts/Bucks.	BC-Aylesbury CM/0020/24 Herts CC PL/0426/24	Quarry restoration, additional revised drawings and updated environmental information.	Pending	<p>CCB Support (restated existing position)</p> <p>No need for further comments. These additional plans and an updated ES addendum do confirm some changes to landscape design, details (footpaths SANG design and panels/furniture). An updated hydrogeological report confirms appropriate revisions to the geological barrier above the aquifer to 1m of clay to sit on unsaturated chalk. This is</p>	3 rd March 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
				an important reassurance and one CCB sought in its original comments.	
Fawley fields Bix nr Henley, Oxon.	P25/S1618/FU L	80 solar panels within residential curtilage (amended plans)	Pending	CCB Comments over details. These amendments deliver our August 2025 recommendations to achieve a better tree/planted screen facing the Chilterns Way PROW running to the rear of the site, along its northern boundary.	18 th March 2026
Mile Barn Farm near Dagnell, Herts	CB/26/00093/V OC	Variations to consent CB/22/00093/ VOC to change design (minor) and make single storey offices two storey	Pending	CCB Comments over details. These comments deal with minor design alterations (mostly to parking spaces and some internal layout changes) but do propose to alter the approved single storey office building to a two-storey equivalent. CCB expressed some concern at the proposed two storey office, which does not comply with the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide (the CBDG) and clashes with the context of the site. CCB referred to the CBDG at 2.41 and 3.7. We promoted the reinstatement of the original single storey office.	18 th March 2026
Land at Watlington Road Lewknor, Oxon	SODC P25/S1430/O PINS 6005839	25 dwellings	Refused 11 th February 2026	CCB No comment. NOTE for CCB Planning Committee: CCB has not commented on this case. The CNL sits to the immediate south of this site. SODC's reason for refusal deals with the context of Lewknor and not the setting of the CNL, stating (amongst others) <i>The proposed development would therefore be in conflict with the objectives and policies of the neighbourhood plan to conserve and enhance the individual and rural character of the parish,</i> There is reference to the Lewknor Neighbourhood Plan policy that refers to 'views back' to the CNL, which would be impacted. However, this impact upon the setting alone would not be sufficient to raise an objection, after considering our own CCB positions statement on setting. A	18 th March 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
				previous appeal decision (2019) was dismissed for 40 dwellings on this site with the Inspector, at that time, finding no harm to the setting of the CNL.	
Land North of Polehanger Berkhamsted	DBC 25/01742/MOA	Outline application 700 homes care home neighbourhood centre, SANG and green infrastructure (re-consultation)	Pending	CCB Support. CCB relied on our previously submitted supportive comments of 5th August 2025. This re-consultation deals with additional details required by some statutory consultees. To confirm, landscape setting to the CNL is not impacted and the site exceeds SANG standards (16.8 ha against the minimum required for this housing being 13.97ha) + an additional 25.3 ha open space/other green infrastructure and mitigation payment of £962 per dwelling. This site is an allocation in the current Dacorum Local Plan but outside the Hemel Garden Communities area.	24 th March 2026
Land North of Little Green Lane Croxley Green, Herts.	TRDC 24/2073/OUT PINS 6004972	600 dwellings, open space, local centre and school	Refused 30 th Jan 2026 Planning Appeal by Inquiry TBA	CCB Comments. This refusal deals with (1) Green Belt and (2) Ancient Woodland. Natural England in their application response refer to the potential changes in the boundary review. The current statutory CNL boundary is set well away to the west, and no grounds exist for an objection based upon the setting of the CNL. NOTE for CCB Planning Committee: In our comments CCB asked for assurances on the chalk stream impact as the Ver runs to the far NE of the site. This comment was considered in the in the applicant's updated ecology report.	31 st March 2026
Land at Bulbourne nr Northchurch, Herts.	DBC 24/02705/MOA PINS 6003892. Reasons for refusal include harm to the CNL. Virtual informal hearing to be	Construction of a nursing home (Use Class C2) of up to 67 bedrooms for dementia care with separate bin/cycle store building, electricity substation and associated	Refused 1 st August 2025 and Planning Appeal by Hearing on 28 th April 2026	CCB Appeal Representations In the appeal CCB would welcome a discussion as to: 1. How the appellant reached their judgements on landscape harm in the Landscape and Visual Impact Statement (December 2025), and 2. Turning to the application of policy, an agreement amongst the parties, that the National	27 th Feb 2026

Location	LPA & Ref No	Development	Status	Summary of the Board's Response	Date
	held on 28th April 2026. CCB raised objections	works and landscaping with all matters reserved except for the construction of access junction and road on Land at Bulbourne Wood, Northchurch, Berkhamsted.		<p>Landscape policy applies holistically. Therefore, land which is poorly managed or degraded in some way is not, of itself, a justification for development.</p> <p>3. That the vehicular access, with removal of vegetation and the insertion of a road/egress/visibility represents a change in the character to the western side of New Road.</p> <p>For the site visit we would recommend the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Viewed from the allotments, walking the access road towards the Sunnyside Rural Trust. 2. Walking past the site along the New Road, to consider the nature of the access/vehicular opening. 3. Standing at the field gate on the footpath, set between Northchurch House and Goreside. This reveals the wider CNL relationship with the settlement edge. 	

APPENDIX 2**Live CCB Development Management Casework at the end of September 2025**

Location	LPA	Ref number	Development	Deadline
Land at Aylesbury Road Wendover, Bucks	BC-Aylesbury area	PL/26/02659/OA	Up to 85 dwellings with open space and landscaping	13 th May 2026
Land at Pheasant Rise, Chesham, Bucks	BC-Chilterns area	PL/26/02036/OA	116 dwellings	5 th May 2026
Saracen's House, green End Road Radnage, Bucks	BC- Wycombe area	25/00632/OPHH APP/K0425/C/26/337 8065	Appeal against planning enforcement notice to remove residential building/use and hardstanding, to remediate the land	22 nd May 2026

Item 11. Planning Policy Casework update Q4 2025/26

Authors: Victoria Thomson, Planning Adviser (Policy), Matt Thomson, Head of Strategy & Planning, Michael Stubbs, Planning Adviser (DM)

Purpose and Summary: To inform the Committee about policy developments and seek endorsement for consultation responses submitted under delegated authority during Q4 2025/26.

Background

1. This paper sets out submissions made on formal planning policy consultations under delegated authority during the last quarter.

Formal responses made in Q4 2025/26**Buckinghamshire Local Plan, “Regulation 18”**

2. Further to the Regulation 18 consultation on a draft plan (to which the CCB responded in October, as reported to the January Planning Committee meeting), Buckinghamshire Council issued a further Regulation 18 consultation in February 2026, this time on a survey of potential sites for allocation in the Plan.
3. The CCB submitted its response to this latest consultation in March (Appendix 1). This involved a preliminary assessment of sites obviously in or otherwise likely to have an impact on the CNL, and a response to specific questions asked by Buckinghamshire Council: given the length of the sites list, and the overall volume of material, the team was not able to review the extensive supporting documentation.
4. The CCB response expressed concern regarding the inconsistencies between the spreadsheet and map provided, the absence of the detailed map data initially offered by the Council, and, most crucially, the fact that the map provided did not include all the layers needed for an informed assessment in line with requirements, notably the CNL itself: this suggests that the Protected Landscapes duty under section 85 of the CROW Act is not being complied with. The Planning Team offered Buckinghamshire Council its support with consideration of CNL matters, ahead of the forthcoming Regulation 19 consultation.
5. (Note that we have not appended the spreadsheet containing our assessment of the sites being considered as it is unwieldy to present and difficult to follow – we are considering how best to present the content of the assessment as submitted.)

National Planning Policy Framework

6. In December, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued a wide-ranging consultation on an update to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which has raised a number of significant concerns regarding future protection for National Landscapes. The Planning Team worked with the National Landscapes Association (NLA) on a [response](#), in which the six key points made were as follows:
 - Welcoming the proposed wording changed from ‘landscape and scenic beauty’ to ‘natural beauty’.

- Expressing concern that other wording changes will reduce protections and lead to the degradation of nationally designated protected landscapes.
 - Suggesting that the weighting to be applied to various policy areas is not changed as proposed in the consultation draft.
 - Encouraging the consideration of protected landscapes in regional/sub-regional planning.
 - Seeking a consistent position in relation to major development in protected landscapes at both plan-making and decision-making stages.
 - Expressing concern at proposed changes to the balance of sustainable development.
7. The government advises that an update will be provided in ‘the summer of 2026’, when the analysis of the consultation responses has been completed.

Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance

8. In January, MHCLG issued a related consultation on consolidated Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance, to which the CCB responded in March (Appendix 2).
9. The consultation document sought to consolidate four existing guidance documents (the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code (Parts 1 and 2) and the design process and tools planning practice guidance) into ‘a single streamlined resource’. The CCB’s response expressed concern regarding the loss of references to understanding context (and particularly landscape context): this is a key stage in place-shaping and the promotion of good design, and needs reinstating.

Dacorum Local Plan Examination

10. The new Dacorum Local Plan covering the period to 2041 was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination in March 2025. Stage 1 of the Examination took place in September 2025, and Stage 2 (a standalone stage, held jointly with St Albans City and District Council, to consider strategic issues relating to the Hemel Garden Communities proposals) in October 2025. Stage 3 took place in March 2026 (revisiting some matters in light of early feedback from the Planning Inspectorate, and addressing others for the first time). The CCB Planning Team attended the Examination to address a number of issues:
- *Protected Landscapes duty*: whilst there was much to commend in relation to handling of National Landscape issues, concern remained that the local plan did not set out how its preparation complied with the requirements of the Protected Landscapes duty.
 - *Allocations*: the preparation of the plan’s spatial strategy, and the lack of justification for the way in which this was translated into allocations, was a particular source of concern. In consequence, the CCB objected in principle to all development allocations in the setting of the National Landscape or which could otherwise adversely affect land in the National Landscape.
 - *Duty to Co-operate*: concern was expressed that the Council did not engage ‘constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis’ with CCB on the preparation of the

local plan after the 2021 consultation (prior to that, engagement had however been exemplary).

- *Green Belt*: whilst the explicit reference in the plan to the National Landscape was broadly welcomed, the conflation of National Landscape and Green Belt policy was not supported (nor the neglect of the National Landscape in policy relative to Green Belt coverage).
- *National Landscape*: various detailed concerns were raised, including in relation to the articulation of the statutory objective of conserving and enhancing the National Landscape, detailed policy wording issues, lack of definition of the National Landscape within local plan maps, handling of biodiversity and habitat issues (including the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and chalk streams), managing water supply and drainage, long-term protection of the Chilterns National Landscape in support of health objectives, reference to ‘conserving and enhancing’ rather than ‘conserving and protecting’, and effectively managing competing interests in the use of land.

11. The Inspectors appeared generally sympathetic with National Landscape concerns (and grateful for CCB engagement): it was clear that the Chilterns have a profile in the Inspectors’ deliberations and that their proper consideration is regarded as an important issue across the board. The Inspectors’ conclusions will not be known until their report is issued, but it is clear that there are significant concerns as to the plan’s soundness in relation to the overarching spatial strategy, and to particular allocations (some with a marked impact on the Chilterns National Landscape), and it seems likely that changes will be made that will support CCB objectives, if, indeed, the plan is not found unsound and restarted, wholly or in part. The weight given to the CCB points raised at the Hearings suggests that Dacorum may be more receptive to local plan engagement in future.

North Herts Design Code

12. North Herts District Council issued a Design Code (Supplementary Planning Document) for public consultation in March, to which the CCB responded (Appendix 3). Whilst detailed in most respects, the draft district-wide Design Code made no reference to the Chilterns National Landscape, thereby failing to comply with the Protected Landscapes Duty, as well as with national policy and guidance, and NHDC policy. The CCB response offered constructive advice on how to address the CNL, and practical support in so doing.

Recommendations

1. **That the Committee NOTES the contents of this paper and ENDORSES submissions made on planning policy matters under delegated authority.**

Appendix 1

Consultation on Draft Local Plan for Buckinghamshire Sites Survey: Chilterns Conservation Board Response

Comments on specific sites in relation to the Chilterns National Landscape

Our comments on specific sites in relation to the Chilterns National Landscape are set out in [a separate spreadsheet]. We have focused our efforts on the sites list, and have not had the capacity to review all of the supporting documentation.

As suggested, we have added a comments column (flagged in yellow) to the lists of both HELAA and NESS sites. Note that the attached includes only those sites we have been able to assess, prioritizing those within the Chilterns National Landscape and its immediate setting. The absence of comments on other sites does not reflect a judgement by the CCB on their suitability for allocation.

We have added some entries to the list of HELAA sites: these appeared on the interactive map but not in the spreadsheet provided.

We would be happy to discuss any of these comments further.

Comments at a settlement level

At this stage we have not provided any comments at a settlement level, but do note the number of sites within (and within the setting of) the Chilterns National Landscape, which will need appropriate consideration.

How these options might affect delivery of – or can support with delivery of - nature recovery projects/projects the CCB are involved with

At this stage we have not provided any comments in relation to projects: we believe that conversation would be more relevant when there is greater certainty on the sites to be taken forward, and would welcome a further conversation at that time. We would ask the Council to note that sites which cause harm to the natural beauty of the Chilterns National Landscape cannot be justified solely on the basis of potential contributions to nature recovery.

We note that parts of Buckinghamshire are affected by the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC 'zone of influence'. We appreciate that the Council has a mitigation strategy in place and procedures to identify affected sites and the need for contributions towards the SAMM and SANG requirements. We have not undertaken our own assessments of SAC-related matters at this stage.

Procedural Concerns

We did respond positively to the original offer of GIS files, and were disappointed not to receive them: this would have made our assessment much easier.

Of wider concern is the fact that the interactive map made available on your website did not include all the layers needed for an informed assessment, namely the relevant layers for the 'areas or assets of particular importance' defined in current NPPF footnote 7: this made it difficult for consultees to establish the issues affecting each site (including in relation to the Chilterns National Landscape), as well as the SAC zone of influence mentioned above, and reduces the accessibility for consultees and hence robustness of this Reg 18 exercise.

More specifically, the absence of the Chilterns National Landscape on the map, and within the information shown for each site (which does include whether a site is Green Belt, brownfield, or grey belt) and the 'conclusion category' in the written assessments (which does mention other site characteristics, such as woodland) suggests that the Chilterns National Landscape is not being considered appropriately in the site selection process, and that the Protected Landscapes duty under section 85 of the CROW Act is not being complied with. We would welcome confirmation that the Council is in fact taking this appropriately into account, and would be happy to provide further advice in support of this if needed.

Defra has published guidance for all 'relevant authorities' on the Protected Landscapes duty here. In addition, the National Landscapes Association (which represents all National Landscapes – formerly known as AONBs) has published more detailed guidance for local planning authorities here.

We very much look forward to working with you as the local plan moves forward to Regulation 19 stage.

Appendix 2 Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance: Chilterns Conservation Board Response

Usability of the draft Design and Placemaking PPG

6 Do you agree that the usability and effectiveness of the draft Design and Placemaking PPG has improved?

No

7 Are there any aspects where clarity, accessibility, or practical application could be improved to better support design and placemaking outcomes?

Consultation Question 1b:

Overview

In relation to landscape (in its broader sense), the revised guidance does not improve usability or support the preparation of effective design and placemaking policies, tools and processes, primarily as it does not bring forward a key stage in place-shaping and the promotion of good design, namely an understanding of context: something that was strongly but proportionately embedded in its predecessor documents.

The importance of context is acknowledged briefly in paragraph 13, which states that, 'in a well-designed place, the seven features come together through an integrated process, each supporting the others to create a distinct and cohesive place that is based on a sound understanding of its context'. Paragraph 19 develops this statement to advise that 'well designed places are based on a sound understanding of context, which is the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings'. Paragraph 15 states that a clear design concept 'may draw inspiration from the site itself, its surroundings or a broader context'. Nevertheless, the prompts to encourage and support an understanding of context are now omitted.

The loss of 'context' from the ten principles of well-designed places in the National Design Guide is a cause of particular concern. Whilst many of the points under this heading are picked up in some form in the new guidance, the overall effect is much reduced: understanding context is not mandated or clearly explained at the outset of the document or the design process it outlines, and, where context is touched on, it rarely considers context at a larger geographical scale, beyond particular sites. By way of illustration, C1 in the National Design Guide refers explicitly to understanding and relating well to 'the site, its local and wider context', specifying that 'well-designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary', and including landform, topography, geography, landscape character, landscape and visual impact, and views inwards and outwards in the list of physical features to be considered. It further advises that 'well-designed new development is integrated into its wider surroundings, physically, socially and visually. It is carefully sited and designed, and is demonstrably based on an understanding of the existing situation, including... the landscape character and how places or developments sit within the landscape, to influence the siting of new development and how natural features are retained or incorporated into it'. Without these hooks, later references in the draft guidance (e.g. the reference at paragraph 205 to design and placemaking evidence potentially including 'context and character of the area' (including 'landscape and green infrastructure' as a 'priority design issue') lack the necessary specificity.

Detailed Points

The lack of consideration of the wider context, including landscape, risks the encouragement of poor-quality design generally, and a negative impact on National Landscapes specifically. Various references in need of reinstatement are outlined below.

- **Baselines:** the importance of baseline data is retained in the new guidance, but crucial specific references to 1) topography, geology, ecology, river and waterways, and flood risk and 2) landscape character (including the wider area) are omitted. Notwithstanding the reference in the revised text explaining that the baseline data ‘may include (but not be limited to)...’ the short list that follows (which refers to landscape and the natural environment only in passing), it is imperative that proactive engagement with the wider environment is actively sought (the importance of the macro scale to successful design and place-shaping is often overlooked). The impact of this omission is compounded by the loss of reference to character studies: the guidance regarding how an understanding of local character and identity is to be obtained is significantly weakened. Reference to ‘environmental factors like landscape, microclimate, orientation, flood risk, noise, and air and water quality’ is made in the revised guidance, but only in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation: its relevance is however much broader than this.
- **Coding plan:** the existing reference coding plans showing ‘landscape designated areas’ (as well as heritage areas, protected open space, and so on) is another regrettable omission: coding plans provide a helpful overview to make clear the strategic parameters for preparation of a design code in any given area. This reference should be reinstated.
- **Edges of development:** the references to the edges of development are now limited specifically to the avoidance of barriers, and encouragement of marginal planting and landscape features. The original reference to ‘the landscape and wider context’ is lost, and needs reinstating.
- **Hierarchy of green spaces:** the reference from paragraph 61 of the National Model Design Code (Part 2) to a ‘hierarchy of green spaces’ is not carried forward to the draft guidance, and nor is the existing acknowledgement that ‘around 90% of England lies outside urban areas including pasture and arable land, forests, moors, wetland, natural spaces and National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty’. Considered against the general lack of reference to the wider context to development proposals, this raises particular concerns with regard to relevant authorities’ ability to comply with section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, which requires them – when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England – to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.
- **Nature:** the references at paragraph 77 (‘Nature’) to ‘an understanding of [the] local and wider context’, and ‘landscape character, and how places or developments sit within the landscape, [influencing] the siting of new development and how natural features are retained or incorporated into it’ are welcome. Also welcomed is the positive (though brief) reference in N1 to ‘considering wider and local context, existing landscape and ecology’ and ‘creating nature rich areas and retaining existing natural features’, but the framing of these points as ‘important green space design considerations’ downplays them significantly, and is likely to result in them not being adequately addressed early enough in the design process: these are fundamental considerations in understanding the context, which then informs all aspects of the resulting design.

- Identity: The reference at paragraph 162 ('Identity') to the identity or character of a place stemming from 'the combination of buildings, streets and spaces, landscapes and infrastructure and how people experience them' fails to confirm that 'landscape' can be considered at the macro and micro scales. In the National Design Guide, paragraph 53 helpfully refers to 'an appreciation and understanding of vernacular, local or regional character, including existing built form, landscape and local architectural precedents', and 'landscape setting' alongside 'soft landscape' and 'backdrop'. The proposed reference at paragraph 166 to 'influences on local and regional identity [including] landscape character or views at an area scale' does not adequately replace the existing text.

Appendix 3

Consultation on North Herts District Council Design Code: Chilterns Conservation Board Response

Design Code Supplementary Planning Document

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your emerging Design Code SPD.

The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) has been disappointed to find no reference to the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) within the draft SPD, given that the SPD will apply to residential-led development 'across the district', i.e. including that part of North Herts which lies within the CNL. This raises very real concerns that, in preparing the SPD, North Herts Council has not complied with the Protected Landscapes Duty under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, namely that, 'in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority... must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'.

In omitting reference to the CNL, the draft SPD also fails to meet its own 'main function' of setting out design expectations in relation to policies in the North Herts Local Plan, including:

- Policy SP9, which states that new development will be supported 'where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context', and that larger proposals will be required to 'create buildings, spaces and streets which positively reflect and respond to the local landscape, townscape and historic character';
- Policy SP12 (green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity), which specifically refers to the Chilterns National Landscape as something to be considered and respected;
- The CNL being identified as a strategic green infrastructure asset in relation to Policy NE1, which requires that the strategic green infrastructure network is protected, conserved and where possible enhanced by development.

The draft SPD does not appear to reflect the requirements of the (current) NPPF or National Model Design Code, particularly with reference to analysis of the area covered, consideration of context and local character, materials, etc - or, indeed, providing a 'coding plan [showing] landscape designated areas', ensuring 'that nature and the historic landscape is woven into the design of places', or – as per the National Design Guide – considering 'how places or developments sit within the landscape, to influence the siting of new development and how natural features are retained or incorporated into it'. That landscape can be evidenced in the North Hertfordshire Landscape Study (2011) with details covering both the Chilterns scarp at Hexton (character area 213) and at Lilley Bottom (212), both embracing scattered Chilterns settlements. In fact, the landscape of North Herts is mostly contained within the two nationally recognised character areas of the Chilterns (area 110) and East Anglian Chalk (area 87).

There are various existing hooks where reference to the CNL could be easily added, including:

- BF04.01 — Contextual Analysis and Design Rationale, where there is reference to the need for 'a comprehensive and clearly presented contextual analysis [to] underpin the architectural strategy for all development', demonstrating 'how the natural environment informs siting, orientation and form', and 'which elements of local character, such as materials, roof profiles or building rhythms are relevant [and] how the proposal will protect, reinforce or improve the area's character'.
- SS01.01, which states 'street and plot layouts must begin from simple, legible configurations, such as grids or other coherent, connected networks, which are then

adapted to respond positively to site-specific conditions including topography, key views, existing landscape features and heritage assets’.

- SS03.04C, which notes that ‘built form must be arranged to frame regular views out to the landscape from the development’.
- OS12.01, which requires that ‘all planting proposals must demonstrate a context-responsive approach to species selection’.

As the 2011 Design SPD makes reference to the CNL (including acknowledging that it gives a village and its setting special value, and (in the design principles) making reference to the Chilterns AONB Building Design Guide), we imagine the current omission is an oversight, but we look forward to its early correction. The 2011 design SPD also links to Neighbourhood Plans, such as in Pirton’s 2011-2031 NP at PNP7 criterion (e), where the setting of Pirton in relation to the Chilterns is a cherished part of its rural context.

A cross-reference in the emerging SPD to the Chilterns AONB Buildings Design Guide (and the accompanying supplementary technical notes on roofing materials, flint and brick) would be welcome, as would reference to relevant policies of the statutory AONB Management Plan for the Chilterns National Landscape. These would assist both in making suitable reference to the characteristics of this protected landscape, and in demonstrating that the Council has complied with the Protected Landscapes Duty.

As drafted, the emerging SPD does not provide a robust ‘platform for further design guidance which the Council will be required to provide as Government reforms are enacted’.

We would be happy to provide our support in addressing this oversight, if that would be of interest.