

The logo for Natural England, consisting of the words "NATURAL" and "ENGLAND" stacked vertically in a bold, sans-serif font, enclosed within a dark rectangular border.

24th November 2010

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Dear Steve

I am writing in support of the need for a planning protocol between South Hams District Council planning section and South Devon AONB Partnership as a means to ensure appropriate attention is given to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB and its setting when determining planning applications.

Whilst I know the authority is a strong supporter of the AONB designation, I would draw your attention to an example of development, which perhaps could have been improved by closer working with the AONB Partnership. Hendham View Farm, Woodleigh is an intensive beef rearing unit of numerous large sheds and associated infrastructure. We consider that the industrial character, sheer size of the development, and location in a prominent position has a significant visual impact and is not in keeping with the character and setting of the AONB. Whilst only partly within the AONB it has a significant impact on the special qualities of the AONB and therefore the purposes of designation.

I understand that these issues were raised by the AONB Partnership following consultation on this development proposal and that these issues were considered by you to have been addressed in a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application. It is likely that earlier and continued discussion with the AONB Partnership would have helped improve the poor quality of the information provided by that assessment, identified additional mitigation measures and ensured the conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the AONB

There are a number of examples of planning protocols drawn up between AONBs and their local planning authority which the AONB partnership has access to which may be of use in drawing up your own. I would recommend the protocol specifically includes your agreement to the following to ensure the local authority is provided with good quality information on which to base their decisions:

seek advice from the AONB Partnership at an early stage and give due consideration to the comments of the AONB partnership when devising planning policies and determining applications for development that affect the AONB within the AONB and its wider setting

require a landscape and visual impact assessment be carried out (following the *Guidelines on Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)*, 2002) appropriate to

the scale of development and carried out by a suitably qualified landscape professional with appropriate experience and membership of the Landscape Institute or equivalent body

To clarify, our planning role is separate to the AONB Partnership. Natural England does not seek to duplicate the efforts of the AONB services on landscape grounds unless we believe that the determination would set either a nationally significant precedent or have a significant impact on the AONB in a regional or national context. We are also a statutory consultee on all developments requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment.

I hope you find this letter helpful as Natural England is fully appreciative of South Hams District Council's ongoing support to the AONB Partnership and to the South Devon AONB designation.

Yours sincerely

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